# FIRST STOP HONOLULU

Ted Scott
Flying Stories

FRANKLIN W. DIXON

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TED SWUNG THE MAN OFF THE WRECKAGE.

THE TED SCOTT FLYING STORIES

# FIRST STOP HONOLULU

## OR

## TED SCOTT OVER THE PACIFIC

By

FRANKLIN W. DIXON

AUTHOR OF
"OVER THE OCEAN TO PARIS,"
"OVER THE ROCKIES WITH THE AIR MAIL,"
"THE HARDY BOYS: THE TOWER TREASURE," ETC.

*ILLUSTRATED BY*

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# BOOKS FOR BOYS

By FRANKLIN W. DIXON

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Or Ted Scott's Daring Long-Distance Flight
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Or Ted Scott, Hero of the Air
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# FIRST STOP HONOLULU

## CHAPTER I

### Cleaving the Clouds

"Can he do it, do you think?" asked Ed Allenby of Bill Twombley, as the two, clothed in aviators' costume, stood amid a crowd of people gathered on the flying field, at Denver.

"Can he do it?" repeated Bill, in accents tinged with scorn at the question. "Why, that bird can do anything that he sets out to do! He doesn't know what it means to fail. He carries my money in anything he starts."

"Oh, I know Ted!" replied Ed. "You can't tell me anything about his ability as a flier! But no matter how able a man is, luck enters in sometimes. The pitcher that goes to the well too often gets broken at last."

"Forty-two thousand feet is an awful lot to beat," put in Roy Benedict dubiously.

"I don't care if it's fifty thousand," declared Bill loyally. "You just show Ted Scott any-

thing and tell him that's what he's got to beat, and he'll beat it."

"Of course, there's always a chance of something going wrong with the plane," put in Tom Ralston, another aviator who had joined the group.

"Of course," admitted Bill grudgingly. "But that single-seater he's going up in has four-hundred horsepower and it's got an air-cooled engine that's a dandy. I guess it'll pull him through, all right."

It was a beautiful afternoon, and the announcement that Ted Scott, the young fellow who had won the plaudits of the world by his immortal flight across the Atlantic from New York to Paris, was going to try to beat the world's altitude record had brought out an enormous multitude of people. The field was black with spectators, and automobiles were parked by the hundreds on the rim of the grounds.

It was not merely the magic of Ted's name that had drawn them there, though that alone always attracted a multitude. Patriotism entered into the affair. For the coveted record for altitude had now been held for a long time by a foreign aviator, and America was anxious to add it to the long list of trophies already won by her sons.

It was chiefly for this reason that Ted had decided to make the attempt. There was no

money prize connected with it, and he did not need any addition to the reputation that had already endeared him to his people. But it irked him to feel that there was any feat in the air that a foreigner could accomplish and an American could not.

It appealed, too, to his sporting blood. To hold up a record before him was like shaking a red rag at a bull. He had the impulse to charge it instantly.

Ted's blood was tingling now as, standing in a little space railed off with ropes to keep the crowd from pressing too close, he made his last preparations for the altitude flight.

"Oh, you Ted!" sang out Bill Twombley as, with the other aviators of his group, he pressed against the ropes.

Ted looked up with the quick, inimitable smile that won all hearts and that had been pictured so many times that all America was familiar with it.

He was tall and lithe, powerfully though slenderly built, with a determined chin, aquiline nose, frank merry eyes and wavy hair.

"Hello, fellows!" he sang back. "Wouldn't you like to go along?"

"Rather watch it from the ground," grinned Bill. "I don't feel good enough to get so close to heaven."

"How are you feeling, old scout?" asked Roy.

"Fine and dandy," replied Ted. "Straining at the barrier and r'arin' to go."

"Here's hoping you don't come down faster than you go up," put in Ed Allenby.

"I may, at that," acknowledged Ted laughingly.

"We're all rooting for you, old boy," encouraged Tom Ralston.

"Don't want any ice cream before you start?" asked Bill quizzically, as his eyes took in the heavy clothing Ted was wearing.

"Anything else but," replied Ted. "I'll have all the cold I want five minutes from now. With these things I'm wearing, it will be all I can do to squeeze into the cockpit."

"You'll need them all," declared Roy. "You'll find it ninety degrees below zero up there."

It looked, however, as though Ted was effectively guarded. He was encased in the heaviest of clothing, with a back pack parachute, several layers of moccasins on his feet and his hands thickly gloved.

"For all the world like a dummy used for tackling by football squads," was his own comment. "Well, so long, fellows. Here comes the big mogul to give the signal."

A soldierly looking man, Major Bradley, Ted's former instructor at the flying school, who happened to be in Denver and had been impressed into service as the master of cere-

monies, came up to Ted as he stood by his plane.

"All ready, Ted?" he asked with a smile, as he shook hands.

"To the last notch," answered Ted, as he stepped into the plane and buckled his strap about him.

"Luck go with you, my boy," said the major, as he waved his hands to warn the excited crowd back from the ropes that bordered the runway.

A mechanic started the motor roaring and another knocked away the blocks in front of the plane.

The plane started down the runway, gathering speed with every second, and when it had gone five hundred feet Ted lifted it into the air, while the crowd burst into a thunder of acclamations.

The echoes of that roar came to Ted faintly, and a moment later died away altogether as he soared heavenward.

His heart exulted as he found himself in what had grown to be his most familiar element. He felt like an eagle released from its cage. All artificial barriers had dropped away. He was alone in illimitable space, and his spirit expanded in sympathy.

He looked below him. Already the plain beneath had melted into a blur with thousands of tiny dots that he knew to be people. Two

minutes later even these dots had passed out of his vision.

In the distance, great mountain peaks seemed to challenge him to go higher, if he could, than they. He accepted the challenge and soon they, too, had faded from view.

Up he went in great sweeping spirals, ever mounting higher and higher until he had reached a height of more than twenty thousand feet.

His engine was working beautifully. It was equipped with a super-charger that, through compression, brought about an approximation of a sea level condition, with the important exception that the process occasioned heating.

He looked at the clock on the board in front of him. He had been in the air about eighteen minutes. His altimeter told him that he was at a height of twenty-three thousand feet.

Nineteen thousand feet still to go if he were to equal the record! Twenty thousand if he were to beat it!

At the height he had reached he could not have breathed the rarefied air without artificial aid. But he had a special oxygen apparatus that gave him a strong flow of the life-giving gas through a tube that he held in his mouth. As long as that flow continued, he might suffer some discomfort, but he would feel no real distress.

Now, with a favorable wind aiding him, he

was up to a height of about thirty thousand feet.

Twelve thousand odd yet to go! After that as many more as he could make!

Ted Scott was not content merely to beat the existing record by a scanty margin. He wanted to make his victory overwhelming, to set up a mark that could not be beaten for years, if ever.

It was bitterly cold. Even through his heavy clothing it cut like a knife. Already it was sixty degrees below zero and growing colder with every thousand feet he ascended.

But Ted paid no attention to the cold, for his eyes were glued on the altimeter.

Thirty-two thousand! Thirty-three! Thirty-four! Thirty-five!

The cold now was more insistent. Frost covered the wings of the plane and made it less buoyant. Frost covered his goggles and obscured his sight. Frost was everywhere. His head looked as though it were encased in crystal. And his brain was growing dizzy.

But his heart was hot within him, for now he had covered thirty-eight thousand feet in height. Four thousand odd more to go!

He was mounting more slowly now, owing either to the increasing rarefaction of the air or the decreased buoyancy of the plane or both. He had to jockey his plane as though it were a tiring horse, faltering as it entered the stretch.

Still he mounted. Forty-one thousand! Then five hundred more.

His heart gave a great leap as he reached the forty-second thousand.

But there were still six hundred and fifty-one feet to go to reach the precise figures of the old record.

Ted was conscious now that all was not right with his machine. The engine was not working properly. The plane was laboring in a way that could not be explained solely by the enormous height at which it was flying.

There was a curious vibration of the engine that he did not like. And he was eight miles above the ground!

But he drove away thoughts of danger. The altimeter was the magnet that held his eyes.

It touched at last the forty-three thousand mark!

Ted Scott's heart thrilled with exultation. He had broken the record! He was higher in the sky than any human being had been since the morning of creation!

It was a thrilling thought, and he reveled in it. He looked up at the sun. No one had ever seen the sun so nearly with unaided vision. He felt a queer sense of kinship with that luminary. He was, as it were, emancipated from the trammels of the flesh.

All the time these emotions were coursing through him he kept the nose of the plane

turned upward. He wanted to go up and up and never stop. The sky was the limit. Earth had slipped away from him. It seemed to be something dim and alien.

From this semi-delirium he roused himself with an effort and looked at the altimeter. He was startled. It registered forty-seven thousand feet!

Now, that vibration he had formerly noticed grew into a series of snorts. Something was wrong. With a touch of the joy stick, Ted turned the nose of the plane earthward.

"Nearly nine miles to go," he murmured to himself.

There was a terrific roar as the engine of the plane exploded!

## CHAPTER II

### Plunging Earthward

Two cylinder heads had been blown off by the explosion of the engine and went hurtling through the plane. One of them knocked the oxygen tube from Ted Scott's mouth.

That tube meant life, and the moment it was torn from his lips Ted began to suffocate, as he could not breathe the rarefied air.

The shock also had thrown him over on his back and he lay there for a moment stunned. The plane was wallowing like a dismasted ship in the trough of the sea.

Choked and desperate, almost unconscious, Ted groped for the oxygen tube. His eyes were dimming, his head reeling, his lungs seemed ready to burst.

For a few seconds nothing rewarded his search, and his senses were rapidly going when his fingers touched the tube. It was above him instead of below him as before, a fact that indicated that the plane had been turned upside down by the explosion.

Ted grasped the tube frantically and inserted it between his lips just in time to keep from passing away. A few draughts of the oxygen restored his strength, and he struggled into position and brought the plane on an even keel.

But it was falling now like a plummet. It had already dropped nearly ten thousand feet while Ted had been struggling for consciousness and breath.

Now five more cylinder heads had joined the first two, tearing through the plane, whizzing by Ted's head like so many bullets. They crashed through the fuselage and wings, leaving gaping holes in their wake.

As if this were not enough, the engine had caught fire! And Ted was still thirty-five thousand feet above the earth, toward which he was falling like a meteor!

Amid the flames and the hurtling missiles Ted Scott kept his head. The first thing to do was to extinguish the fire. This he did by carrying the plane into a side slip.

But no sooner was one blaze extinguished than another broke out, and four times in the next fifteen thousand feet was Ted compelled to use all his skill to put out the fires.

At twenty thousand feet he had at last mastered the blaze. Then he turned his gaze earthward.

Should he jump? It was the safer way.

But if he did that he would lose the plane,

and the instruments on which he relied to establish the fact that he had broken the record would be smashed.

Yet, if he stayed, he seemed doomed to almost certain death, for the crippled plane was like a runaway horse, bent on killing its rider. Its wings were riddled, its balance lost, and Ted could manage it only in part and that with the utmost difficulty.

It was falling now with frightful rapidity. Should he jump or stay?

While Ted Scott is balancing in his quick mind the chances of life and death, it may be well, for the benefit of those who have not read the preceding volumes of this series, to tell who Ted Scott was and what had been his adventures up to the time this story opens.

Where he had been born, who his parents were, whether they were now alive or dead, Ted did not know. His earliest recollections were of being in the home of James and Miranda Wilson, residents of Bromville, a town in the Middle West. They had cared for him kindly and sent him to school, but when he was ten years old they had died within a few months of each other.

The little waif was adopted, however, by Eben and Charity Browning, who had no children of their own. They were goodness itself to him, and he in turn was devoted to them.

Eben Browning had been for many years

the proprietor of the Bromville House in the town from which it took its name. He was big-hearted and friendly, and in the early days of the town had a large patronage. Many of his guests were fishermen drawn to the town by the excellent fishing to be found in the Rappock River.

But Eben fell on evil times when the town received a large accession of prosperity from the establishment there of the Devally-Hipson Aero Corporation, makers of airplanes. The mammoth plant brought an army of workmen and others to the town. Several new hotels sprang up to meet the demand, and their spruce and up-to-date appearance and equipment put the Bromville House, now old and shabby, at a disadvantage.

This was bad enough, but a greater blow fell when the great Hotel Excelsior was erected, throwing all others immeasurably in the shade. It was palatial in its appointments and equipment with wide verandas, beautiful grounds, a band pavilion and a superb golf links annexed that offered inducements for tournaments and drew expert players from all parts of the country.

Even this crowning blow might have been borne with more or less philosophy by Eben if he had not had a bitter grievance against the proprietor of the Hotel Excelsior, Brewster Gale.

Eben had owned all the land on which the Hotel Excelsior and golf links were located. Gale had bought it from him at a reasonable price, but, except for the few hundreds paid down to bind the bargain, Eben had never received a dollar of the purchase price. Nevertheless, Gale's lawyers, as unscrupulous as himself, by a bewildering series of financial juggles—freeze-outs, reorganization, holding companies, and the like—had managed to give to Gale an apparently clear title to the property. Eben Browning had no money to prosecute his fight in the courts, and he and Charity had settled down in dumb misery to the acceptance of their fate.

Ted Scott, as he grew older, had done all he could to help the old folks, painting, repairing and keeping the hotel grounds in shape, and when the Aero Plant was established in the town, he found work there. He was quick and intelligent and was rapidly advanced in position and pay. Most of his wages he handed over to his foster parents every week, and that helped somewhat to keep the wolf from the door.

Ted had become wonderfully proficient in the making of airplanes, the more so because he was intensely interested in flying and hoped at some time to become an aviator. But for this he needed to go to flying school, and as this would cost a good many hundred dollars he

could not see his way clear to achieve his ambition.

An opportunity came when Walter Hapworth, a wealthy young man and a golf expert, staying at the Hotel Excelsior, visited the airplane works. Ted was assigned to show him around, and the information the lad possessed impressed the visitor. He learned of Ted's ambition and in conjunction with a Mr. Paul Monet, whose life Ted had saved, offered to advance enough money to enable Ted to go to a flying school.

Ted accepted the money as a loan, and did his work so well at the school that he became its cleverest and most daring pupil. By exhibitions he earned enough to repay his loan, and then found a position in the Air Mail Service.

Both Mr. Hapworth and Mr. Monet had invested considerable money in the Excelsior golf links, which was under the control of Brewster Gale. They became suspicious of Gale's honesty because of some queer transactions, and their suspicions were redoubled when Ted told them of the way Gale had swindled Eben.

In the Air Mail Service Ted's ability and daring speedily put him at the head of the list of pilots. At that time the country was agog with the contest for a twenty-five thousand dollar prize, offered to the airman who should first make a flight across the Atlantic from New York to Paris. Ted was eager to compete, but

had not the necessary money for plane and expenses. Mr. Hapworth, however, offered to finance the trip, and Ted secured leave of absence and went to the Pacific Coast to superintend the building of the *Hapworth*—named after his benefactor.

How Ted, to the amusement at first of the country, ventured into competition with pilots of world-wide fame—how he stirred that same country into flame by his record-breaking flight in two jumps from coast to coast—how in the dim light of a misty morning he mounted into the skies—how he crossed the Atlantic surges amid uncounted perils—how he swooped down like a lone eagle on Paris are told in the first volume of this series, entitled: "Over the Ocean to Paris; Or, Ted Scott's Daring Long-Distance Flight."

Numberless offers flowed in on Ted by which he could have made a fortune in the movies, lectures, exhibitions, and various ways. But he did not care to capitalize his fame and devoted himself simply to writing a book of his adventure.

In the meantime, Mr. Hapworth and Mr. Monet had secured enough evidence to bring Brewster Gale to book in the matter of the golf course and to force restitution on that score. But he still refused to do justice to Eben Browning.

The great Mississippi floods had brought dis-

aster to the South, and Ted volunteered in the aviation section of the Red Cross to do what he could for the stricken people. In the course of his work he had many thrilling adventures with snakes, alligators and tottering levees.

Later Ted attached himself to the Air Mail Service in a particularly dangerous section of the Rockies. On one occasion he risked his life in a blizzard to carry a surgeon for an operation on an injured young fellow of Ted's own age, a youth named Frank Bruin.

How Ted incurred the enmity of another airman who twice made attempts on his life—how he saved a community from a forest fire—how, because of an airplane disaster, he was lost in the wilds—these and many other stirring incidents are related in the preceding volume of this series, entitled: "With the Air Mail over the Rockies; Or, Ted Scott Lost in the Wilderness."

Now to return to Ted as, with his plane plunging madly earthward, he tried to decide whether he should jump or stay with the plane.

In its downward sweep the plane was soon within fifteen thousand feet of the earth. Ted made his decision. He would stay! He and his plane would perish or triumph together!

But he did not intend to perish. He had been in tight places before and pulled out of them. With every sense alert, with every nerve at its highest tension, yet with his hand as steady as

steel, his head as cool as ice, he set himself to the task of mastering his plane in its headlong flight.

It was a tremendous task, for the machine was desperately crippled. The wings were torn and in some places twisted. Its delicate equilibrium was destroyed. The fire had nearly burned through two of the struts and they might break at any moment. The engine was worse than useless.

It was enough to make the stoutest heart quail. But Ted Scott scarcely knew the meaning of quail.

By the time the plane had fallen another five thousand feet, Ted had been able to check somewhat its meteoric speed. It was impossible to keep it on an even keel, but he had regained some measure of control.

A touch here, a touch there, here a side slip to put out a new blaze, there a turn to the right to take advantage of a breath of wind, a hundred different calculations, each one made with lightning quickness! It was a superb exhibition of airmanship on Ted's part, with his life as the stake if he should make a single mistake.

On the grounds below there was tumult and consternation. The crowd had watched with bated breath as Ted had ascended until he had become a mere dot in the sky and then had vanished from sight.

"Gone!" exclaimed Roy.

"He'll be back," declared Bill confidently.

"Yes, but how?" muttered Ed. "Who knows what the cold up there will do to his engine?"

"Don't worry," counseled Bill. "He'll come back safe and sound and he'll bring the record with him."

For perhaps forty minutes the spectators stood with faces turned toward the sky. Then from the sharpest-sighted a cry arose.

"There he comes!"

A moment later the excitement was mixed with consternation, for they saw that the plane was diving down with a long stream of white smoke shooting from its tail.

"It's afire!" yelled Bill in anguish.

"And falling!" groaned Roy.

"Why doesn't he jump?" cried Ed, beating his hands together desperately.

## CHAPTER III

### From the Jaws of Death

Many of the spectators covered their faces with their hands, unable to endure the sight of the impending tragedy.

"She's coming like a rocket stick!" groaned Tom Ralston. "What's holding Ted? Why doesn't the jump?"

"Why doesn't he?" yelled Bill. "I'll tell you why! Because he doesn't have to! Look!"

All looked and saw that the headlong descent of the plane had been checked. A moment later the anxious onlookers could detect that it was under some measure of control.

"The old galoot!" fairly screamed Bill Twombley slapping Roy so furiously on the shoulder that he almost knocked him down. "Just watch that boy! See him jockey that plane! Say, is he good? I ask you! Is he good?"

"The best ever!" conceded Tom jubilantly. "He never knows when he's beaten."

"There's only one Ted Scott!" exclaimed

Roy Benedict. "No other man alive could handle that plane as he's handling it."

Only those expert airmen, of all that breathless crowd, could really understand what Ted Scott was doing. They knew by the wild gyrations of the plane its crippled condition. They knew to what kind of task Ted had set himself. They could picture the lad with his nerves of steel sitting at the controls ten thousand feet in the air and waging his single-handed battle with death.

And they could see that he was winning! He was winning!

Down came the wounded bird, still fluttering wildly, but knowing that it had met its master. Down still further in swooping spirals, broken by sudden halts, but still coming down.

Then at last, as the crowd scattered to give him room, Ted brought the plane to the ground, rushed it along the runway and came to a stop.

His flying comrades were in the van of the crowd that surged about the plane, and Bill Twombley was fairly blubbering as with the others he yanked Ted out of the plane and folded him in his embrace.

"Safe, thanks be!" he cried, and the cry was echoed by a thousand throats.

"You fellows seem glad to see me," laughed Ted, but his laugh was husky, for he had been under a terrific strain and this welcome threatened to upset him altogether.

"We wouldn't have given a plugged nickel for your life a few minutes ago!" exclaimed Tom. "How did you do it?"

"Just did it, that's all," returned Ted, grinning faintly.

"But what in thunder happened to the plane?" asked Ed.

"What didn't happen to it, you'd better ask," said Roy, as he surveyed the wreck.

"Engine exploded," explained Ted briefly. "Things were lively for a few minutes with the cylinder heads whizzing like bullets through the plane. Then the machine caught fire and I had to put it out four or five times. The oxygen tube was knocked from my mouth. That's about all."

"Apart from that, nothing happened?" asked Ed dryly.

There was a general laugh that broke the tension.

"When did the explosion happen?" asked Major Bradley, who had just pressed his way through the crowd and thrown his arm over Ted's shoulder.

"When I was at the peak of the climb," returned Ted. "About forty-seven thousand feet."

"Forty-seven thousand!" exclaimed the major.

"Beat the record with over four thousand to spare!" gasped Tom.

"Something like that," replied Ted. "There's the altimeter to tell the story. The barographs in front and rear of the plane will confirm them. That's the reason I didn't jump. I wanted to save the instruments."

"Did I tell you that boy would do it?" crowed Bill exultantly.

His comrades hoisted Ted on their shoulders and bore him through the shouting, turbulent crowd, all anxious to get near enough to pat his shoulders or grasp his hand.

It was with a sigh of relief that the young aviator relaxed when the door of his quarters closed behind him with only his special intimates to keep him company. He was profoundly weary but unreservedly happy. He had been at grips with death and conquered. He had done what he had set out to do. He had added another laurel to the wreath that crowned him as America's idol. He had brought from abroad the record that had been so long coveted by his country's airmen.

He stripped off his heavy clothing, took a cold shower and was himself again.

His comrades clustered about him, and there was a babel of questions and exclamations as they made Ted, despite himself, tell all the details of that magnificent battle with death.

"What else is there left to do, Ted?" asked Bill. "You've walked off with almost everything."

"Oh, plenty, I guess," laughed Ted. "I've been so bent on getting this altitude record that I haven't thought much of anything else."

"You've licked the Atlantic," put in Roy. "What's the matter with taking a crack at the Pacific?"

"You mean that flight from California to Hawaii?" asked Ted thoughtfully.

"Just that," replied Roy. "Why don't you enter, Ted? I'll bet you'd cop the prize."

"Thirty-five thousand dollars!" remarked Bill. "Thirty-five thousand sweet, juicy berries! Makes my mouth water just to think of them."

"They do sound pretty good, and they could be won in about twenty-four hours of straight flying," agreed Ted. "But there'll be a whole lot of fellows trying for it."

"I see that there are a good many entries," admitted Roy. "But you know how those things are. Some of the fellows will get cold feet. Other will find that their planes aren't good enough. Others will meet with accidents while they're tuning up. By the time the race actually starts there probably won't be more than two or three pairs left. And I don't believe any of them would have a chance against you."

"I don't believe many of them will have a swifter plane than the *Hapworth,*" mused Ted, to whom the idea appealed strongly. "But

speed isn't the whole of it. A large part of it will be navigation. Honolulu is a mighty little spot in the Pacific Ocean. It would be the easiest thing in the world to miss it altogether."

"Not you!" disclaimed Bill. "Didn't you hit the Irish coast within four miles of your bull's-eye when you flew across the Atlantic? That was some navigating! And what you did once I'm willing to bet you can do again."

"Go to it, old boy," urged Ed. "It'll be another feather in the cap of the Air Service."

"I'll think it over," promised Ted, "but there's plenty of time yet to make my entry, and there's no need for an immediate decision."

There was a knock at the door and Major Bradley came in. Ted's friends went out leaving him alone with his former instructor.

"Ted, my boy, I believe that flight of yours was the most thrilling in the history of aviation," the major said, as he seated himself. "Plunging down with an exploded engine through the air with cylinder heads whizzing about you, with fire breaking out again and again, and yet keeping your head and bringing the crippled machine to a perfect landing! Maybe the newspapers won't eat it up!"

"Oh, I don't know," replied Ted modestly. "I'll admit it was a bit exciting, but I was too busy to think about it much at the time. But about the record! What do the barographs say? Do they confirm the altimeter?"

"One of them was injured by the fire so that it's unreliable," replied the major, "but the one in the front of the plane was all right, and, as far as we could see from a hasty examination, is just the same as the altimeter. We'll have to send it in to the Bureau of Standards at Washington to have it calibrated before we can tell to a foot the distance. But there's not the slightest doubt that you've beaten the record, and beaten it good and plenty."

"Bully!" exclaimed Ted. "Now the foreign aviators will have a new mark to shoot at, while we sit back and watch them do it."

"No doubt they'll try," declared the major. "But I doubt if it'll be equaled in this generation, if ever."

"No telling what will happen in aviation," laughed Ted.

"Maybe. But yours was a wonderful exploit. I'm overjoyed that it was at my school you learned to fly."

"Have you found out yet what caused the explosion?" asked Ted.

"Not yet," replied the major. "Some of the engineering corps are busy at it now. The machine is a perfect wreck. Of that nine-cylindered engine, seven cylinder heads blew out and the other two are cracked. How you ever got down alive beats me."

"I've been trying to figure out the cause of the trouble myself," said Ted. "I think the

lubricating oil had become affected, even ignited. Then in the swift descent, while I was groping about for the oxygen tube, friction acting on gases made the engine catch fire."

"As good a guess as any other," assented the major. "Also, centrifugal force while your plane was whirling about may account for some of the trouble. Anyway, it surely was trouble while it lasted. But now, my boy, it's up to you to take a good rest. You ought to tumble into bed and sleep the clock around."

"Can't," replied Ted, looking at his watch. "I've got to start on my Air Mail route this evening."

"Forget it," counseled the major. "Let somebody else take your place to-night. You've done enough for one day. Don't tax yourself too much."

"I'm feeling as fit as a fiddle, now that I've had a shower," replied Ted. "I've never missed a trip yet, and I don't want to begin now. I'll have plenty of time of sleep to-morrow."

"Stubborn as a mule, as of old," laughed the major. "So I won't waste my time trying to make you change your mind. But you've still got time for forty winks and I'll leave you. As soon as I get the official report on the barograph from the Bureau of Standards I'll let you know."

He left then, and Ted, in the two hours that

remained before he must report for duty, got his "forty winks," from which he woke with his nerves calmed and his strength restored.

It was a royal send-off that he got that evening as, after seeing that the bags of mail were properly stored in the biplane, Ted Scott stepped into the cockpit of his machine and gave the signal for the blocks to be knocked away. The flying field was still buzzing with his marvelous exploit, and a host had hurried out from the city to gaze on the hero of the hour.

"Bad night for flying, Ted," remarked Major Bradley, as the motor started to roar.

"It is, sure enough," replied Ted, as he looked at the mist that was settling down. "But I've seen worse, and Uncle Sam's mail has got to go through, no matter what the weather."

With a wave of the hand he started down the runway, lifted his plane into the air, and was lost to sight.

The beacons from the flying field cast their glare, although with diminished force, through the dense mist, and the lights of Denver also helped him in turning the nose of the plane in the right direction. But he was away from these in a few minutes, and then he found himself in a darkness that could almost be felt.

It was not the darkness, however, but the dense fog that gave him the most concern. On a dry night, even in the absence of moon and

stars, he could yet discern objects at some distance ahead of him. At least, they made a deeper blur against the blackness.

But when the fog enshrouded him, as it did to-night, he could not see ten feet in advance of the plane. He had to trust to his altimeter to keep him at a sufficient height to clear buildings, the tops of trees, and, in a mountainous country such as he was now traversing, the summits of lofty cliffs. If his instruments failed him, he would be in the deadliest peril.

As for direction, he had little fear of going astray. He had his trusty inductor compass, the same that had guided him so accurately in his flight over the Atlantic. It had never failed him yet, and he felt confident that with its aid he would be able to go like a homing pigeon straight to his goal.

On he went, with a speed twice as great as an express train. He had attained a height sufficient to clear the loftiest peak that might be in his path.

He had hoped that at that altitude he might find a lessening of the mist, but in this he was mistaken. Everywhere was fog, dank, dripping, enfolding the plane as with a shroud. But there was nothing he could do but to drive on through the night.

As he sat there with his hand on the joy stick and his eyes glued on his instruments, his subconscious mind was busy with many things.

First and foremost was the glorious victory that he had achieved that day. His pulses thrilled as he thought of it. Again he lived that splendid struggle for the mastery of his broken plane, that grim and unyielding combat with death.

He knew that by this time in every big newspaper building of the country, reporters, editors, copy readers and pressmen were putting into print in great headlines the story of how Ted Scott, the idol of the nation, had scored once more and had again made aviation history.

He would not have been human if this had not given him gratification. But far more than the sense of personal victory entered into his elation. It was America of which he thought. The country of which he was so proud had snatched from overseas the record that it coveted, and he rejoiced that he had been the instrument in achieving this triumph for his people.

He was humbly grateful, too, for his marvelous escape from death. Never had he been so near the great beyond. He wondered if dear old Charity Browning had been praying for him. He was sure she had.

The thought of Charity, as always, reminded him of the mystery that enshrouded his birth. Eben and Charity, it is true, had taken for him the place of father and mother. None could

have been more devoted to him, and his heart swelled with gratitude toward them.

But, after all, they were not his real parents, his own flesh and blood. Who were they, the man and woman who had given him birth? Where were they now? Were they living or dead?

How could he even be sure that the name he bore was that of his parents? He felt defrauded. In some vague way he seemed to be set apart from his friends and companions. They had or at one time had had parents whom they had known, who had loved and cared for them. They had memories of a home over which presided a father or mother or both. He was denied all these blessed memories. He grew bitter at the thought.

It is true he had made a name for himself. It was a name that stirred his countrymen whenever they heard it. It was a name that had echoed through the world. It was blazoned on the scroll of history. He was one of America's immortals.

He valued this beyond expression. Yet there were times when he would have given all the fame he had so gloriously won, if, by so doing, he could tear apart the veil of mystery as to his origin.

He was roused from his musings by a roar that came to him through the fog.

Instantly all his senses were on the alert.

He knew at once what that roar meant. It was caused by the motor of an airplane. Some other night rider of the air was abroad!

Now the roar grew nearer. The other plane was coming toward him, whizzing like a bullet through a fog so thick that it was like a solid wall.

Deprived of the advantage to be gained by sight, Ted had now to reply solely on his hearing. The difficulty here was doubled by the fact that the roaring of his own motor mingled with that of the oncoming plane.

In a desperate effort to avoid a collision, Ted shot upward. But the sound that came from the other motor told him that the unknown airman had adopted the same maneuver.

Then Ted dived. So did the other. They were for all the world like two men meeting in the street, when both turn to the left and then to the right at the same time until finally they pass.

But the men in the street could see. Ted and the other pilot were like blind men.

Just then the fog thinned out a little and Ted could see a great black mass hurtling toward him like a catapult!

## CHAPTER IV

### A Close Call

Like lightning Ted Scott acted.

A swift touch at the controls, and he side-slipped, bringing his plane sharply to the right.

There was a breath-taking instant of suspense, then the other plane zipped by and disappeared in the night.

It was the narrowest of escapes, and Ted felt the perspiration breaking out all over him. Death had grazed him, but not quite gripped him.

Grazed him literally, for the passing had not been effected without damage of some kind. There had been a distinct shock and a sound of cracking, and Ted knew by the erratic way in which the plane was behaving that something was wrong.

How serious the damage was, he had no way of knowing, but he sensed that the trouble was in one of the wings. As he peered from the cockpit he noticed that on the left the wing appeared to be bent and drooping.

It behooved him to make a landing as soon as possible, in order that he might ascertain and remedy the injury.

Now the fog that had been so unfriendly thus far seemed to be relenting, as though it wished to make amends. It was shredding out below him rapidly, and soon thinned to such an extent that he could distinguish the rosy glow that told him he was passing over a town.

It was perilous to try to make a landing under such conditions, but it was still more dangerous to stay aloft with his plane perhaps in such a condition that it might crumple at any moment.

He had no alternative. He must come down!

He sailed around the outskirts of the town in wide spirals until he made out what seemed to be a comparatively level field that formed part of an estate.

With the utmost care he descended and made his landing. To his great relief he found that the ground was as level as a lawn. There were no trees, except at the side, and he brought the plane to a stop within fifty yards of the charming suburban house to which the lawn was attached.

Lights streamed from several windows and Ted could hear the music from a radio inside.

He jumped from the cockpit and made his way to the door. It was necessary for him to apologize for his intrusion on the owner's

grounds. Then, too, he wanted to borrow a lantern and perhaps ask the help of the owner, in case the injuries to the plane proved serious.

He rang the bell. The radio music was turned off, there was a movement inside, and a moment later the door opened and a woman stood framed in the doorway.

She was lovely in form and feature, barely past girlhood, and her beautiful eyes widened as she saw the figure in the aviator's suit.

Ted removed his helmet and bowed.

"Good evening," he said. "Please excuse—"

He got no further.

"Ted Scott!" exclaimed the young matron. "Well, of all things! Come in! Oh, I'm so glad to see you! Frank," she called to a man who was sauntering leisurely toward them, "here's Ted. Come running!"

There was no need for the urging, for the man rushed forward, dropping his pipe in his eagerness.

He threw his arms around Ted in a bear's hug and dragged him into the room.

"You old rascal!" he shouted, as he released him and pushed him into an easy chair. "What good wind blew you down this way? You're as welcome as the flowers in May."

It was the first time Ted had seen Frank Bruin and the former Bessie Wilburton since

their marriage. Ted had been best man at the wedding. It was fitting that he should have been, for it was largely due to his efforts that the marriage had taken place at all. For he had been the messenger of Cupid that had mended their broken romance and brought the young people together again.

"So good of you to come to see us!" exclaimed Bessie happily.

"You bet!" ejaculated Frank. "And you won't be allowed to get away in a hurry, either."

Ted grinned.

"I'm pleased beyond words to see you both," he said; "but I'm afraid you'll have to guess again. Fact is, I'm a workingman and have to stick to my job. I'm carrying mail tonight, and you know the mail can't wait. I had a mishap in the air, and had to make a landing to see what the damage was. And good luck brought me right down on your lawn!"

In response to their eager questions he told them of the incident in which he had been one of the participants.

They listened breathlessly and were profoundly grateful at his narrow escape. But they were bitterly disappointed that he had to leave them so soon.

"Let the old mail go," suggested Bessie. "What if people do have to wait for their let-

ters a little while longer? It won't hurt them."

"Uncle Sam doesn't look at it the same way," laughed Ted. "But I'll make a regular visit before long when I can get a few days off."

"If you don't, I'll never forgive you!" declared Bessie, and Frank echoed the threat.

"So you've been at your old tricks again, I see," observed Frank, with a grin.

"What do you mean?" asked Ted.

"Listen to the innocent, Bessie," Frank appealed to his wife. "What do I mean? Breaking the altitude record. That's what I mean."

"Oh, that," replied Ted.

"Oh, that," mimicked Frank.

"How did you hear about it so soon?" asked Ted, a little uncomfortably.

"All America has heard about it by this time," replied Frank. "You forget the radio. Not ten minutes before you came, the announcer was telling us all about it. Forty-seven thousand feet! The engine exploding, the plane on fire, the cylinder heads hurtling through the machine, the tube knocked out of your mouth, the fight to get the mastery of the plane, the perfect landing. Gee, it was a wonderful story, and the announcer spread himself! We were all broken up. Chills were chasing down my spine. I was trembling. Bessie was crying—"

"Stop telling family secrets," ordered Bessie promptly.

"Well, luck was with me—" began Ted.

"If you say 'luck' again, I'll hand you one," laughed Frank, doubling his fists. "It was pluck. It was nerve. It was audacity. It was lightning thinking. It was superb airmanship. It was—oh, well, what's the use?"

"I thought you'd run out of words before long," grinned Ted, as he rose reluctantly from his seat. "But come along now, old man, and we'll take a look at the machine. Bring a lantern, will you?"

"While you boys are doing that I'll get a little lunch ready," put in Bessie. "But I still have a grudge against that old mail."

"As long as you don't have a grudge against this young male it's all right," laughed Frank, as he pinched her cheek affectionately.

It was an awful pun, and Bessie punished him by slapping him and telling him to run along. But it was a very gentle slap.

"Gee, Frank, but you're a lucky dog," remarked Ted as the young men made their way to where the plane was standing.

"Luck's no name for it!" declared Frank jubilantly. "She's the sweetest girl on earth and I'm the happiest man. And you're responsible for it, Ted. I only hope that when the time comes you'll have equal luck."

Ted was relieved to find that the damage to

the wing of his plane was not so serious as he had feared. He was an expert mechanic, and while Frank stood by with the lantern and occasionally lent a hand, Ted tinkered away until he had the wing in shape.

"That will do until the end of the trip," he said at last, as he straightened up after a careful examination of the entire machine. "I'll have a little more done to it when I reach the flying field."

"I hope the other fellow wasn't hurt any more than you were," remarked Frank, as they made their way back to the house.

"I hope not," echoed Ted. "I think it was his motor that grazed me, and that's pretty tough."

They found the table prettily set and an appetizing lunch prepared. Bessie, flushed and sweet, presided at the coffee urn, and again Ted mentally registered that Frank was a lucky fellow.

It was hard to tear himself away from that cozy dining room and those warm friends and fare away into the night. But duty was imperative, and he had to obey its call.

With repeated urgings to come soon for a long visit, the happy young folks waved and shouted farewell as Ted jumped into his plane and soared away in the darkness.

His last glimpse of them as they stood with arms intertwined remained with Ted as he

whizzed along beneath the canopy of heaven, and again the thoughts that had assailed him earlier in the evening returned to plague him.

It was not envy of his friends' married happiness. He was still heart whole and fancy free. Some day he might meet a girl like Bessie and be as happy as Frank. But at present all his heart and thought were engrossed with his profession.

What he did envy was the normal position the young folks occupied in the world. Their names belonged to them. They knew their parents. All their past was known to them. They had a host of home ties, connections, relatives.

But he, Ted Scott, had none of these. He felt like a branch that had been severed from the trunk. He was rooted somewhere in the past, but did not know just where. If he should marry sometime, he reflected bitterly, he would not even be sure that the name he would offer to a girl was rightfully his own.

But he did not have long to indulge in these musings. For though by now the fog had vanished, the wind had risen, and he had to use all his craftmanship to keep his plane on a level keel.

Moment by moment the gale increased until it had reached the proportions of a miniature cyclone.

He turned the nose of his plane upward, try-

ing to reach a more quiet stratum of air. But everywhere the demons of the wind were howling and the tumult about him became pandemonium.

He stiffened to the task before him. He had been out before many a time in storms and won through. But that had been when his plane had been in perfect condition, and to-night he could not be sure that there had not been some material weakening of the plane from the collision that he had not been able to detect in the necessarily hasty examination he had made.

Now, to the fury of the wind, lightning and thunder were added. Reports like those of a thousand cannon boomed over the mountain gorges. Great jagged sheets of lightning shot across the sky.

With one of the most vivid glares came a shock that shook the plane from end to end!

## CHAPTER V

### A Startling Revelation

Following that terrific flash and shock, the plane quivered like a wounded bird.

Then it whirled about and about with such violence that Ted Scott was almost torn from the straps that bound him to his seat.

The glare almost blinded him and his ears were ringing as though the drums had burst.

That the plane had been struck by the lightning he felt certain, and the certainty was increased by the sight of balls of fire running along the motor.

But a moment later he felt sure that it had been but a glancing blow and that the electric current, after delivering a threat, had passed away in search of another victim. For the plane, after the initial quivering had been spent, had gallantly responded to the touch of its master and soon was once more riding the gale, its speed increased by the fact that the wind was coming from the rear.

Yet Ted's heart was in his throat. He kept

casting glances here and there all over the plane, fearing that at any moment he might see some scarlet thread of fire running along the more inflammable portions, and it was only after fully five minutes had elapsed without any such ominous sign appearing that he ventured to relax.

But it was only in a comparative sense that he relaxed, for all his skill and nerve were still needed to manage the plane.

Gradually, however, the storm abated in fury. The rain ceased to fall, the thunder died away in a distant rumble, and the lightning withdrew into its caverns.

With the lessening of the tempest came the dawn, the blessed dawn, that had never been more welcome to Ted Scott.

He was weary almost to the point of exhaustion, for the perils of the night coming as an aftermath to the strain and excitement of the day before had taxed his strength and vitality to the utmost.

He felt an almost irresistible desire to sleep. More than once he felt his eyes closing. But they never entirely closed, for the subconscious urge was on him, and he would arouse himself with a start and again bend over his controls.

It was with infinite relief that at last he reached his terminal airport and delivered the bags of mail. Then he turned the plane over to the mechanics for a thorough overhauling,

went to his quarters, and obeyed at last the exhortation of Major Bradley to "sleep the clock around."

When at last he woke refreshed it was to find that marked excitement had been aroused by the slight collision of the night before.

"Place has been fairly buzzing with phone messages from Denver and other places to know whether you were safe," one of the mechanics, Alf Holden, told Ted when he appeared on the flying field. "Seems that the other fellow you nearly smashed with landed at Denver and told the story. The folks there figured out that it was your plane that he met, and they were going bugs about it till we told 'em you'd landed here all right."

"Who was the other fellow?" asked Ted. "Was his plane damaged?"

"Nothin' but some paint scraped off," replied Alf. "Seems he was some army guy on his way to the coast. He could feel that he'd hit you, and he was afraid you'd smashed. Gee, they was wild over it till we told 'em different."

"It sure was a close shave," observed Ted. "But a miss is as good as a mile. How's the machine?"

"Fine an' dandy," returned Alf. "Us fellows has gone over every inch of it, fixing it up a bit here an' a bit there and now it's fit to fly for a man's life. But shucks, what's the

diff'rence? A feller that came through all you did when you busted that record can't be hurt, nohow. Say, tell us all about that. The fellers here have been talkin' of nothin' else since you done it."

Again Ted was forced to tell to Alf and the other mechanics and pilots that gathered around him the details of his thrilling exploit.

Denver, too, was still ringing with it when he got back there to be given an enthusiastic welcome by his comrades, which was made all the warmer by the fears they had entertained regarding his safety after the army flyer had made his report of that dramatic episode of the night.

"The old rabbit's foot is still on the job," gloated Bill Twombley, as he threw his arm over Ted's shoulders.

"Can't kill that fellow with an axe," beamed Ed Allenby.

"Wish I had his recipe," grinned Roy Benedict.

"If everybody was like him, the life insurance companies would go out of business," observed Tom Ralston.

It was a regular reception that Ted held at his quarters, for the reporters and photographers were there in swarms anxious to get stories and pictures of the young hero who again had stirred the heart of the nation, and it was late that night that Ted with a sigh of

relief found himself with only Tom Ralston, who had outstayed the others, to keep him company.

Perhaps none of those warm friends of Ted's were quite as devoted to him as Tom, for Ted had saved his life under circumstances of the deadliest peril.

It had happened when Ted was serving under the Red Cross at the time of a great Mississippi flood and Tom's plane had caught fire high in the clouds.

Ted, from the ground, had seen the danger, and leaped into his own plane and soared upward. By superb generalship and courage, he had approached the blazing plane and made a daring and thrilling rescue in the clouds.

Tom Ralston had never forgotten that rescue, and from that time on he had fairly worshiped Ted. It was largely the desire to be near the latter that had led Tom to seek employment in the same division of the Air Service to which Ted was attached. At any moment Tom would have laid down his life for his rescuer.

Now their conversation had drifted to the days when they had fought the Mississippi together.

"By the way," said Ted, as a thought struck him, "do you remember that day in the hospital, Tom, when you were starting to tell me something and the nurse stopped you?"

Tom started and flushed a little.

"Did I?" he asked evasively. "Guess I was chinning a lot of nonsense those days. Delirious part of the time."

"You weren't delirious then," replied Ted. "You started to say something about a man named Scott having saved your father's life once. You thought it queer that I should have helped you out of a bad fix and that a man of the same name should have done the same thing for your dad."

"It was rather odd," agreed Tom uneasily. "But of course there are lots of funny coincidences in life. Guess I'll be going now," he added, rising to his feet and yawning. "You must be dead tired, old boy, and I'm keeping you up."

But the yawn was too elaborate, and Ted's quick mind sensed something behind it.

"Look here, Tom!" he said. "What are you trying to keep from me? Do you know anything?"

"My teachers never thought so," replied Tom, with what he thought was an engaging grin.

"Cut out the wise cracks," commanded Ted. "You know what I mean. Do you know anything about my family?"

"How should I?" countered Tom. "I never met you in my life until I saw you down South."

Ted shook himself impatiently.

"Can't you answer a straight question?" he demanded. "What do you know about any one named Scott?"

"It's a common enough name," mumbled Tom. "I've come across lots of them in my day."

"Quit your stalling, Tom," cried Ted, now thoroughly aroused. "This man Scott, who saved your father's life. How did he do it? Where did he live? Come now, tell me about it."

"Why, there isn't much to tell," said Tom reluctantly. "My father was living at the time in Grantville, a little town down East. He slipped one day as he was getting into a boat and fell into the water. He had hit his head in falling and was being swept toward a dam when this neighbor of his, Scott, plunged in and rescued him just as he was about to go over. Scott had a hard time, but he was a powerful man and finally got my father to shore. I was just a baby at the time, but I've often heard my folks talk about it."

"What was this Scott's first name?" asked Ted.

"Raymond," returned Tom. "Raymond Scott."

"Was he married?" asked Ted.

"He had been, but his wife had died," Tom replied. "She died when their baby was born.

But really, Ted, I've got to go now. I have a hard day to-morrow."

"You're going to stay right here," declared Ted decidedly. "You say there was a baby. A boy or a girl?"

"A boy," replied Tom.

"What was the boy's name?" queried Ted.

"How do I know?" countered Tom. "I never saw the kid."

"What was the boy's name?" pursued Ted relentlessly.

"Any one would think I was a census taker," complained Tom. "I didn't keep a record of the name of every kid in Grantville."

"Look me straight in the eye, Tom, and tell me you don't know the name of that Scott kid," commanded Ted.

Tom tried to, but his gaze wavered and fell.

"You're mighty poor at dishonesty, Tom," said Ted quietly. "Now out with it."

"The name was Edward," said Tom, driven into a corner.

Ted's heart gave a bound.

"My name!" he exclaimed.

"What of it?" demanded Tom. "I suppose there are thousands of Edward Scotts in the United States."

"Then you don't suppose I might have been that kid?" asked Ted, regarding Tom steadily.

"How can I tell?" replied Tom. "I tell you I never saw the kid."

Ted was silent for a moment.

"Is Raymond Scott still living in Grantville?" he asked.

"No," replied Tom. "He died nearly twenty years ago."

Ted's heart sank. Even if the clue he was pursuing led anywhere, his father and mother were both dead. He was an orphan!

With an effort he mastered his emotion.

"What became of the kid?" he asked at length.

"Some folks adopted him," replied Tom. "They moved away from Grantville a short time afterward, and I don't know where they went."

"Do you know the name of the family that took him?" queried Ted

Tom was silent.

"Tell me the truth, Tom," Ted adjured him. "What was the name?"

"Wilson," muttered Tom.

"James and Miranda Wilson?" asked Ted eagerly.

"Yes," said Tom.

"Glory hallelujah!" shouted Ted, springing to his feet. "I've found out who my folks were. I've solved a problem that has tormented me for years. It cuts me to the heart to know that they are dead, but at least I know who I am."

Tom did not seem to share Ted's enthusiasm,

though he forced himself to murmur a word of congratulation.

"The very first thing I do," went on Ted, "is to get a leave of absence and go to Grantville."

"Oh, what's the use?" protested Tom. "There's nothing to do or see there. Your folks have been dead for twenty years. It would only make you sad to see their graves."

"I know it will," admitted Ted. "But at least it will make me feel that I really belonged to somebody, and I can learn a lot about them from some of the old residents there."

"All the same, I wouldn't go," repeated Tom.

There was something so grave, so ominous in Tom Ralston's tone that Ted looked at him in surprise and dawning apprehension.

## CHAPTER VI

### A Thunderbolt

"There's something behind your words, Tom," said Ted Scott. "Why shouldn't I go to Grantville?"

"Oh, just on general principles," replied Tom evasively. "Let the dead past bury its dead. We're living in the present. If your parents were living and there was anything you could do for them, it would be a different matter. But they're dead, and there's nothing but heartache in thinking about it."

Ted regarded his companion curiously.

"There's been something mighty queer about this whole thing, Tom," he said slowly. "You've believed right along, haven't you, that I was the Ted Scott whose father your family knew in Grantville?"

"Yes," admitted Tom. "That is, I have for the last year or so. After the flood work was over I went back to the old town and pieced a few things together that made me tolerably certain."

"And you knew that I'd probably be eager to get all that information you had?" went on Ted.

"I suppose so," murmured Tom reluctantly.

"Then why haven't you told me?" asked Ted.

"Oh, it just hasn't happened to come up," said Tom uncomfortably.

"That's no answer," declared Ted. "But when at last it did come up to-night, why have I had to drag everything from you piecemeal? Why have you tried not to look me in the eyes? Why have you been in a hurry to get away? What have you been keeping from me?"

Tom twisted about miserably but made no answer.

"You might as well tell me, for I am going to Grantville and will find out anyway," went on Ted.

At this Tom capitulated.

"All right, old pal," he said, "I'll have to tell. I wanted to save your feelings, but you've driven me into a corner. The fact I was trying to keep from you was that your father died under a cloud."

"What do you mean?" cried Ted, with a constriction of the throat that made his voice shaky.

"He got into trouble," went on Tom. "There was a shooting case in connection with

a bank and a man was killed. Your father was arrested charged with the murder."

"Murder!" gasped Ted. His father a murderer!

"That was the charge," continued Tom, putting his hand on Ted's shoulder. "Of course there's a good deal of difference between a charge and actual proof. Lots of people in the town believed he was innocent. But there was evidence that looked bad against him."

Ted's brain was reeling. His mouth was hot and dry. His heart was performing curious antics.

He scarcely dared to listen to what was coming next. The hangman's rope? The electric chair?

As in a daze he heard Tom's voice. He was saying:

"The case never came to trial. Raymond Scott died of pneumonia in prison."

It was a terrible revelation and Ted was stricken as though by a thunderbolt. But at least that crowning disgrace had been spared him. His father had not been executed.

"I'm sorry, old man," said Tom feelingly. "I'd have cut my tongue out rather than have told it to you willingly. But you made me tell you. Heaven knows I tried hard enough to side-step."

"I know, Tom," said Ted huskily. "It's

knocked me all in a heap, but I'll get my bearings presently."

"Remember this, Ted—" Tom comforted him, "that thousands of innocent men have been arrested for crimes that they never committed. If your father's case had come to trial, he might have proved his innocence; he had friends who believed in him. You and I might be arrested to-morrow on some false charge. But charging is one thing and proving is another. If you do go to Grantville—though I hope you don't—but if you do go, you'll find plenty of people there to tell you that Raymond Scott was simply made a scapegoat for somebody else's crime. And I, for one, know that no murderer could have a son like the Ted Scott I know."

He rose and clapped Ted on the shoulder.

"Thanks, old boy," replied Ted. "But tell me just one more thing before you go. Was anything discovered after my—" he swallowed hard—"after my father died? Was any one else arrested? Was the case followed up?"

"I don't think so," replied Tom. "The matter was dropped then and there. There was talk, of course, and once in a while the papers would print some little thing about it, then it gradually died out. Most people there, except the older ones, have forgotten about it. Now, just one word more, Ted. Take a fool's advice and don't go to Grantville. You've

made a wonderful name for yourself. At this minute you're the most popular young fellow in the United States. You've done this on your own, and you deserve everything you've won. Nobody dreams that your history is connected with this Grantville affair. Nobody ever will dream of it. Why stir up a lot of scandal. You can't do your father a bit of good and you may do yourself a lot of harm. The Wilsons are dead. Probably I'm the only man living that knows Raymond Scott was your father. And you know that old Tom will be as dumb as the grave. Dumber, probably," he added on a light note to conceal his real emotion.

"I know, Tom," said Ted, grasping his friend's hand. "I'll think it all over carefully before I act. Good-night."

For a long time after Tom left him, Ted Scott sat with his head buried in his hands.

So this was the ending of his dreams!

He had solved the secret of his birth. But what a solution!

His father charged with murder! His father dying in jail!

He, Ted Scott, the son of a man who, if he had lived long enough, might have gone to the electric chair!

Why had he not been content to live in a fool's paradise? Why had he sought to rend the veil of the past? Why had he fairly

dragged from Tom—good old Tom—what the latter had tried so desperately to hide?

He thought of the Wilsons, the kindly couple who had nurtured him during his early years. They of course had known. And in the goodness of their hearts, probably at a great sacrifice, they had torn themselves loose from their old familiar home and come to the Middle West so that the little waif need not grow up in a community where other children might taunt him with being the son of a murderer. His heart warmed toward them.

Did Eben and Charity Browning know? Had the Wilsons, feeling the approach of death, confided to the Brownings under pledge of secrecy the things they felt the latter ought to know?

If so, the kindly old couple had kept the secret well. They had never spoken of his birth of their own accord, and when he had himself alluded to it they had parried his questions with seeming innocence or indifference, so that he had come to the conclusion that they were as ignorant of the matter as himself.

Yet now, as he thought things over, he could not but recall many things that had not struck him particularly at the time, but that now, in view of what he had learned from Tom, were endowed with significance—sudden pauses when he had broken in upon them while they were in earnest converse, little scraps of talk

in which the name of Scott had been mentioned, pitying glances cast toward him that he had surprised in casting up his eyes, a host of things, small in themselves, yet which, when put together, gave him the impression that Eben and Charity indeed knew.

He had no resentment at their reticence, for he knew that it was prompted by love for him and the desire not to throw the slightest shadow on his young life.

For a little while, as he pondered these things, all the triumphs that Ted Scott had achieved seemed to him as dust and ashes. His flight over the Atlantic—his marvelous work during the Mississippi floods—his latest breaking of the altitude record—of what avail were they to remove from him the bitterness of knowing that he was the son of a man who had died in jail while awaiting trial for murder?

Then there came a great surge of pity and affection for the father he had never seen or, if he had seen, could not remember. He thought of the anguish and shame that father must have endured, the ignominy heaped upon him. Dying at last in jail, with no one near that loved him to make easier his last moments!

Had he been guilty? Everything in Ted Scott revolted at the thought. He might have shot, but that might have been in self-defense or

perhaps in attempting to hinder a crime from being committed. Or, at the worst, it might have been under intolerable provocation for which no jury would have held him to account.

But that his father could have wickedly, coldbloodedly committed a murder, Ted could not believe. He *would* not believe it.

He drew some comfort from Tom's statement that a great many of the people of the town did not believe in his father's guilt. That pre-supposed at least a certain amount of friendship and esteem in which he was held by the citizens.

Should he go to Grantville? He weighed what Tom had said in trying to dissuade him from such a step. He shrank from the possible scandal that might ensue. He was proud of the reputation he had won, and did not want it to be tarnished. He knew the nine days wonder that would be stirred up if the facts became known, the columns upon columns of newspaper space that would be devoted to it. He writhed under the thought.

Yet he owed it to his dead father to clear his memory if possible, and the conviction grew in him that he would never know a moment's peace if he failed in that duty.

Yes, he would go to Grantville. But he would not make his identity known. He would pursue his researches as quietly and discreetly as possible. But he would pursue them.

The conclusion he reached helped to calm his turbulent emotions, and at last he rose from his seat and went to bed. Not to sleep, however, for, perhaps for the first time in his healthy young life, sleep failed to come to him. He tossed all night upon his pillow, a prey to a thousand disturbing thoughts, and when he arose, he was feverish and unrefreshed.

He tried to be his usual self that day, but it was evident that he was laboring under great depression.

"I've decided, Tom," he said to his friend the first chance he had to see him alone. "I'm going to Grantville."

Tom shook his head.

"I'm sorry, Ted," he said. "But you must be the judge. I know better than to try to move you when you have once made up your mind. I only hope that you will be successful in what you're going to try to do."

"What's eating you, Ted?" asked Ed Allenby inelegantly, as he met him a little while later. "You look as though you had lost your best friend."

"Yes," declared Bill, who had come up with Ed, "wouldn't think to look at you that you'd just beaten the altitude record and that the whole country's buzzing with it."

"Had a bad night," explained Ted lamely. "Hardly got a wink of sleep."

"Figuring out I suppose how you're going

to win that race over the Pacific to Honolulu," laughed Ed. "By the way, Ted, have you come to any decision about that? You'll have to make your entry pretty soon, you know, if you're going to compete."

"I may try for it," replied Ted. "But I've got a little private business on hand now that may take me a week. I'm going to try to get a little time off to go to Bromville. There'll be time enough to enter for the race when I get back."

Even the information he got from Major Bradley a little later on, that the barograph had been officially calibrated by the Bureau of Standards and had established beyond a doubt that he had made over forty-seven thousand feet, found Ted listless. All honors seemed little to him now until and unless he cleared his father's name.

Ted had no difficulty in getting a week's leave of absence from Maxwell Bruin, the head of the Air Service Corporation. The latter had never forgotten how Ted had saved his son's life, and there was nothing in his gift that Ted could not have for the asking.

Ted had sent a message to Eben and Charity Browning telling them of his coming, but asking them to keep it to themselves. He was in no mood for the ovation that would be sure to be organized for him as Bromville's most distinguished citizen.

He had planned to reach the town a little after nightfall, but a storm that drove him out of his course delayed him so that it was after midnight when he reached the Bromville flying field.

He knew every inch of it, and had no trouble in making his landing in the dark. Then, after stowing the *Hapworth,* the monoplane in which he had made his trans-Atlantic flight, in one of the vacant hangars, he started out on foot for the Bromville House.

It was an unsavory part of the town he had to traverse, and just as he was passing a place notoriously known as a liquor dive, the outer door was burst open and a young man staggered out, trying vainly to defend himself against three others who were pummeling him furiously.

A well-directed blow from one of the three struck the young man who was the target of their attack, and only by a desperate effort did he maintain his feet.

But a second blow, still more vigorous, made him measure his length on the sidewalk. And as he struggled to rise the others pounced upon him with fists and feet.

## CHAPTER VII

### Three Against One

Ted Scott had an antipathy to brawls and ordinarily would have passed on. But three men piling on one who had been knocked from his feet stirred him to anger and disgust.

"Lay off there!" he shouted, intervening between them and the prostrate man and hurling back one of the assailants who was aiming a vicious kick at his victim's head.

"What are you butting in for?" snarled one of them.

"Give him some of the same kind!" yelled another.

"Knock the head off him!" shouted the third.

They made a concerted rush at Ted, and in a moment he was in a *mêlée* of flying fists.

There was no help to be looked for from the befuddled fellow in whose behalf Ted had taken up the cudgels, and the young aviator sailed in.

He was never better than when he was fight-

ing against odds, and his furious attack made the three ruffians give ground. Moreover Ted was helped by the fact that all his assailants had been drinking.

Some of their blows reached him, but the majority he ducked and dodged. His own arms were working like flails, and when his blows landed they did mighty execution.

For about two minutes the fight kept up and then the three ruffians began to give ground. Ted kept at them relentlessly and a moment later they broke and fled.

The young aviator waited a minute to get his breath, and then turned to the man, who had wriggled back from the sidewalk and was sitting stupidly with his back against a tree.

He was evidently in no condition to be left alone, and Ted felt disgustedly that he would have to take him home, or at least put him on his way there.

"Where do you live?" asked Ted.

"The Hotel Excelsior," muttered the man thickly.

Ted was startled. The kind of people who lived at the Excelsior were not apt to be found in a "speakeasy" in a disreputable quarter of the town.

He looked more closely at the intoxicated man. Then he recognized Greg Gale, the dissipated son of the proprietor of the Excelsior!

For a moment he was tempted to turn on his

heel and leave him there. For Greg Gale and his equally worthless twin brother, Duckworth, had been Ted's bitterest enemies. He had reason to believe that they had more than once attempted to cripple or kill him, once when a great stone had whizzed by his head on a dark night and again when the struts on his plane had been maliciously cut. Later on they had tried to run him down with their automobile when he defended a girl against their insults. No, he owed them nothing, except perhaps vengeance.

He hesitated a moment.

But whatever Greg Gale might be, however much the present brawl might have been due to his own faults, Ted could not leave him there at midnight at the mercy of enemies who might return to wreak still further their rage upon him.

He reached down and helped the fellow to his feet, got his hat, which had been knocked off in the struggle, and clapped it on his head.

"You izh good skate," muttered Greg drunkenly, as Ted took his arm and started him going. "Cleaned out myself, but my father'll give you some money for takin' me home."

"I don't want your money," said Ted curtly, as he urged him forward in the direction of the Excelsior.

It was evident that Greg had not the slightest suspicion of the identity of his rescuer.

"You zhum fighter," muttered Greg admiringly. "Knocked those fellers out like tenpins. Zhum muscle! Good fighter m'self, but kinda sick an' couldn' do much."

Ted made no answer.

"Las' time I had a fight," went on Greg, "wazh with feller named Scott. Know him, Ted Scott, feller that flew over Atlantic? Swelled head, that feller. I licked him good an' proper."

Ted, who remembered what a terrific drubbing he had given Greg and his brother Duck at the time, could hardly restrain a smile. But still he said nothing, and devoted himself to getting the young man home and off his hands as soon as possible.

At the entrance to the Excelsior he met the night watchman of the hotel. The man looked contemptuously at Greg.

"Here," said Ted, delivering up his charge, "take care of him and get him up to his room. He's been in a fight, and I guess is pretty well bunged up."

"Yesh, Jake," put in Greg. "But y'ought 'a' seen what I did to the other fellers."

The watchman winked at Ted.

"Yes, I know," he said, as he took his arm. "Come along quiet now, and I'll get you to bed."

Ted hurried away and in a little while he reached the old familiar home. It was nearly

one o'clock in the morning, and everything was quiet about the hotel. But Eben and Charity were waiting for him on the veranda, in a fever of anxiety because he had been so long delayed.

They rose from their chairs as they heard the familiar footsteps and hurried forward. Ted took the steps three at a time, and in a moment Charity had him in her arms, while Eben stood by patting his shoulder.

"Thank the Lord you've come!" exclaimed Charity, through her happy tears. "I was gettin' awful worried about you, Ted."

"Oh, I'm sure to turn up like a bad penny," laughed Ted, and he went on to tell them how he had been delayed by the storm.

"But even at that, I'd have been here earlier, if I hadn't met an old friend of ours," he said. "I found Greg Gale being beaten up, and I took him home."

The old couple listened to the details of the fight and Eben shook his head.

"A bad egg," he said. "Those two fellows are a disgrace to the town. Mixed up somehow in every shameful thing that happens. Some day the folks will lose patience and drive them out of Bromville."

But they soon left Greg for a more pleasant subject, Ted himself. The Brownings had read, of course, all about the winning of the altitude record and the thrilling adventure

that had accompanied it, but they wanted to hear more from Ted's own mouth. Charity gasped as she listened.

"To think of you in that burning plane up there alone in the sky!" she exclaimed, covering her face with her hands to shut out the fearful picture. "Oh, Ted, if I had known it at the time, I think I would have almost died of fright."

Ted patted her work-worn hands.

"Don't worry, Mother dear," he said. "You're my mascot, and nothing can happen while you're praying for me."

He had planned to broach the matter of his birth to the old folks as soon as he reached home. But they were so unfeignedly happy in having him again with them that he had not the heart to bring the question up just then. Besides it was very late, and he mentally deferred the matter to the next day.

In the late evening of that day when there was a momentary lull in the affairs of the hotel he brought his foster parents over to a secluded part of the veranda.

"I haven't told you yet just what I made this hurried trip for," he said, hardly knowing how to begin the conversation.

"No," said Eben. "But we didn't care much as long as it gave us a chance to see you again."

"It's this way," went on Ted uneasily. "I

heard something while I was in Denver about my father and mother."

The old couple started violently and looked at each other. Charity clasped her hands together nervously. Eben cleared his throat.

"What did you hear?" asked Eben guardedly.

"I heard that my mother died when I was born and that my father died in jail while he was awaiting trial on a charge of murder," replied Ted.

"Who told you anything like that?" demanded Eben in a tone of indignation that, however, did not ring quite true.

"A friend of mine who claimed to know the facts," said Ted. "I've come home to ask you if what he said is true."

There was silence for a moment. Then Charity burst out in violent sobbing.

"You poor lamb!" she exclaimed, as though he were still the little boy that she had first taken into her heart. "You poor, dear lamb!"

"Then it is true?" queried Ted.

"Yes, my boy, it is true," admitted Eben gently. "But I'd have lost my right hand rather than ever to have had you know it. We hoped to keep it from you as long as you lived."

"But don't you care, Ted," sobbed Charity. "I don't believe your father ever did anything like that. It was just a wicked plot to ruin him. Nobody that could have a son like you

could commit murder. It wouldn't be in him!"

"Lots of innocent men have been arrested on just such a charge," put in Eben. "If your father had lived, I'm sure he could have cleared himself. But he's dead now, poor fellow, and that ends it. So just try, Ted, to put it clear out of your mind."

"But his death didn't end it," declared Ted. "He died under a cloud. To the world in general he was a probable murderer. There's a blot upon his memory that ought to be cleared away."

"Ought to be, of course," conceded Eben. "But how can it be after all these years? Probably some of the witnesses are dead. Others have moved away. Others have forgotten a lot and their testimony wouldn't go for much, anyway. Just take my advice, Ted, and forget about it. You can't do any good by rakin' it up. You've never done anything yourself to be ashamed of, an' that's the only thing that counts. Let the dead bury the dead."

"You'll always be our own dear son, Ted," put in Charity, feeling for his hand. "Ain't that enough?"

"No one could possibly have been more like a father and a mother than you have been," declared Ted feelingly. "You've been goodness itself and I'll never forget it as long as I have breath. How could I? You've won my

love as well as my gratitude. But I feel that it's a duty I owe to my dead father to try to clear his name. I'd feel like a coward and a shirker if I didn't."

"But how are you going to do it?" asked Eben, in perplexity.

"I'm going to Grantville and make inquiries among the people who were living there at the time," replied Ted. "I may get a clue from them that will put me on the track of the real guilty person."

"But suppose—I only say suppose, Ted, for I don't believe your father was guilty and the Wilsons didn't either—but suppose he actually did commit the murder—good men have done it sometimes in a moment of passion—how would you feel then? As things are now, you can have the comfort of feeling that he might have been innocent, anyway. But if you actually found out that he did do it, you'd feel ten times worse than you do now. Ignorance is a good thing sometimes."

"I've thought of that too," replied Ted. "There's a good deal in what you say. But I'm so made that I can bear anything better than uncertainty. I'm strong enough to bear the truth, no matter how bitter it may be. Then, too, if I had to think all my life that I might have been able to clear my father's name and hadn't tried to do it, I'd be ashamed to look at myself in the glass."

"Mebbe so, mebbe so," sighed Eben.

"But, Ted," put in Charity, "how can you be askin' all them questions without people gettin' curious? Everybody knows you from your pictures. Then, too, Miranda Wilson told me you was the dead image of your father. An' your name bein' Scott an' all—"

"I know," admitted Ted. "But of course I'll use another name and make up a bit and wear a pair of colored glasses, so that you'd hardly know me yourself if you met me on the street. I'll get by all right."

So it was settled, though not without many misgivings and mental reservations on the part of the old people. Ted himself was heavy-hearted enough when at last they separated for the night.

But their depression would have been blended with consternation if, a few minutes after they had left the veranda, they had seen the bushes at the side of that veranda stealthily parted as a young man glided away in the darkness with an expression of evil gloating on his face.

And that consternation would have deepened if they had recognized the face as that of Duckworth Gale!

## CHAPTER VIII

### On the Trail

Early the next afternoon, after having completed all his arrangements, Ted Scott took an affectionate leave of his foster parents and boarded a train on the first stage of his journey to Grantville, which he expected to reach by noon of the following day.

He had been so accustomed to going everywhere by airplane that it seemed queer to be traveling on a train. But it would not have done to take the *Hapworth* along, for he wanted to sever himself for the time from anything that suggested aviation.

Moreover, the long journey, with no responsibility such as attached to the guidance of the plane, gave him ample time for reflection as to just what he would do when he reached his destination.

He had chosen the name of Acton for the purpose of his trip, had combed his hair in a different way, drawn a few faint lines under his eyes and about his mouth, pulled his trav-

eling cap rather low over his forehead and put on a pair of dark glasses as though he were suffering from some affection of the eyes. The disguise was simple enough but extremely effective, and it was the face of a stranger he saw as he looked in the glass of the lavatory on the train.

The next day the train reached Grantville on schedule time. Ted felt a contraction of the heart as he looked on the town that was his birthplace. Here his father and mother had lived and died, and here the former had languished in the jail from which death had given him a release.

He went to the leading hotel of the place, registered and dined. Then he set forth to see the town.

It was a thriving place of about fifteen thousand people. There were some handsome blocks in the business section, but the residence part of the town consisted mainly of comfortable, old-fashioned houses that had made little concession to the progress of time. In one of these, no doubt, Ted's father and mother had lived in the happy days preceding their trouble. Ted's eyes dimmed at the thought. He was thankful that at least his mother had passed away with no premonition of the disaster that was to wreck her husband's life.

But what had a tragic interest for Ted was the First National Bank on the main street

of the town. Here it was that Mr. Scott had been employed as cashier. It was busier now and more prosperous than it had been in his time, but it was the same building that had been standing there for thirty years, as Ted ascertained from a casual inquiry.

Ted stepped inside and asked for change of a twenty-dollar bill. A brisk young fellow accommodated him. In a railed-off enclosure was the desk of the president of the bank, and not far from it another with the word "Cashier" in gilt letters that were worn and tarnished with years. Again Ted's heart was stirred with emotion as he thought that his father had probably once sat at that very desk.

Ted's main idea had been to get in conversation with some of the older residents of the place, preferably of a lowly station, who loved to talk whenever they could find a listener and who would not attach the significance to his inquiries that might be attributed to them by alert business men.

With this in mind, he sauntered through a little park in which were shaded walks and benches scattered at various places under the trees.

Children were playing on the green, women were rolling their charges about in baby carriages, and old men were sitting on the benches, sometimes in groups, sometimes alone.

Hardly knowing how to start on his investi-

gation, Ted was about to move on when he heard a man speak.

"How goes things at the bank?" asked a man carrying a box of tools.

"Good—fine," answered an old man on a bench near by.

"No hold-ups lately?" went on the first man, with a grin.

"No—an' don't want none," was the answer. Then the man with the box of tools passed on.

The word "bank" had interested Ted Scott. There had been only one bank in the town—the one in which his father had worked.

Ted dropped down on the bench where the old fellow with wrinkled face and grizzled hair was sitting. He had just been filling his pipe, and at the moment was groping about in his pocket for a match.

"Take this," said Ted, drawing a box of matches from his pocket and handing it to the old man.

"Thankee kindly," the veteran said, as he accepted the offer and lighted his pipe. "Thought I had plenty with me, but seems I was mistook."

"Pretty little park you have here," remarked Ted, as he crossed his legs and leaned back.

" 'Taint so bad," agreed his companion. "Come here every afternoon when it ain't rainin' to rest up a little before goin' to work."

"Most people are getting ready to quit work at this time in the afternoon," remarked Ted, with a smile.

"Yes, but not old Ezry Tompkins," was the reply. "I'm night watchman in the bank over there," and he pointed to the building in which Ted had been a few minutes before.

"The First National?" observed Ted, with apparent carelessness but with his pulses beating a little more quickly.

"Yes," replied Tompkins. "Been there a good many years now—goin' on twenty-five or twenty-six, I reckon. Was janitor at fust. But ain't so spry now as I uster be, an' when the bank folks foun' the work gittin' too heavy for me they give me an easier job."

"You must have seen a good many changes in twenty-five years," observed Ted.

"Quite consid'able," was the reply. "Grantville's growin' this last few years so's you'd hardly know it for the same old town. Bank's growin' too," he added with pride. "Ain't many better ones for places of this size in the state."

A policeman strolled by and nodded to the old man.

"Got a regular police force now, too," Tompkins went on, glad to impress the stranger with the growing importance of the town. "Used to be that we had only a couple of constables. Now we got a half a dozen

regular policemen an' a nice new station an' a patrol wagon an' all."

"I see," acquiesced Ted, pretending to smother a yawn. "Shouldn't think they'd have much to do, though. Town seems so peaceful and law-abiding. Don't suppose anything hardly ever happens."

"Don't fool yourself," returned Tompkins. "There's a heap of bootleggin' goin' on. An' every once in a while there's a burglary. There's been a couple of murders here too," he added impressively and with a little touch of triumph.

"Murders!" returned Ted. "That sounds interesting."

"One of 'em happened three years ago," went on Tompkins, "but there wasn't much to that. Jest a couple of Portuguese got drunk an' one stabbed the other. The biggest one happened nigh on twenty years ago. Or mebbe it was only nineteen. It's gittin' kind o' hard for me to remember dates."

"Another drunken brawl, I suppose," remarked Ted, looking at his watch as though he ought to be going.

"No siree, nothin' like that," said Ezra emphatically. "There wasn't any question of drink about that! There was robbery mixed up with it."

"You don't say," observed Ted.

"Yes, an' I was an eyewitness," said Tomp-

kins importantly. "That is, in a manner of speakin'. I didn't see the killin', but I heard the shots and I got there in time to see Scott standin' over Elverson."

"Who was Scott?" asked Ted, his heart threatening to suffocate him.

"He was the feller that did the killin'," replied Tompkins. "That is, he was s'posed to have done it. But I ain't never been too sure of that. I knew Scott mighty well, an' he was the last man I would have thought of as doin' a thing like that."

"What evidence did they have against him?" asked Ted.

"Well, it was this way," replied Ezra. "It was late at night, mebbe about half past twelve. Warn't many people about, 'cause most folks here gets to bed reason'bly early. My son's wife wuz sick with a fever, an' I had been down to their house an' was comin' back home when I heard a shot—that is, two shots —up here near the bank, an' of course I started runnin'. When I got there I seed a man lyin' on the sidewalk—Elverson, his name wuz, an' he was one of the richest men in the town—and this here Scott was bendin' over him. Two or three others had come up by that time an' one of 'em was the constable. He grabbed Scott an' asked him what he'd done to the man an' why he'd done it."

"And what did Scott say?" asked Ted.

"He explained it this way," replied Ezra. "He said he had been workin' late at the bank an' had jest put out the lights an' come out of the door to start for home. Did you notice that alley right alongside of the bank?"

Ted nodded.

"Well," went on Tompkins, "Scott said that as he was passin' the alley he heard some s'picious sounds a little way up it an' started to invest'gate. There had been some bank robberies in other towns near by, an' our folks wuz a little nervous about it for fear their turn would come next. Scott went a little way up—or so he said—an' called out to know if any one was there. There was a flash, an' a shot went by close to his head. Scott himself had a pistol, 'cause often he carried a good deal of money, an' he shot back. Then he heard something fall, an' lookin' back he seed a man lyin' on the sidewalk. He rushed out to him an' bent over him an' tore open his coat. A wallet tumbled out of the pocket, an' Scott had picked it up to put it back when the men rushed up an' nabbed him."

"Seems to me that sounded reasonable enough," remarked Ted. "That might easily have happened."

"Sure," conceded Ezra. "But there was some funny things about it. In the fust place, Elverson had a lot of money in that pocket-book—'bout eight thousand dollars—an' Mr.

Scott was the only man that knew he had it."

"How was that?" queried Ted.

"Seems like Elverson had come to the bank that very afternoon," explained Ezra, "an had drew out that money. Scott waited on him, 'cause it was after hours an' the others had gone. Elverson told him that he wanted the cash as he was goin' at daylight nex' mornin' to another town an' needed the cash to close a deal. An' he let out at the same time that he wouldn't get much sleep that night, 'cause he was goin' to a supper party an' wouldn't get home till midnight or later."

"All that might have been true without Scott's having anything to do with the murder," observed Ted.

"Standin' alone, yes," admitted the old man. "But it come out later that Scott was hard up for money. It seems that he had endorsed another man's notes out of fren'ship, an' the fren' had cleared out bag an' baggage an' left Scott to pay the notes—'bout six thousan' dollars, if I remember right. He was desp'rit an' had been tryin' to raise the money from fren's but couldn't. He didn't know which way to turn."

"But the fact that he was hard up was no proof that he'd steal to get the money," declared Ted, his heart hot within him, though his tone was careless.

"No," agreed Tompkins, "not proof as you

might say. But it showed a motive, as the lawyer folks call it. But the wust thing wuz when a couple uv fellers—three uv 'em, as a matter of fact—up and said they'd seen him do the shootin'."

"What?" exclaimed Ted.

"That's what they said," replied Ezra. "There was Si Flint an' Jim Harrow an' Jack Sonn that said they'd been comin' home from a barbecue an' they seed Elverson comin' down the street. Jest as he got opposite the alley they said they seed a figger hidin' up against the alley wall. Then they saw a flash from a gun the figger was holdin', an' Elverson fell. Then this here Scott rushed out, tore open the man's coat an' grabbed the wallet. Before he could get to his feet an' run they nabbed him an' held him for the constable, who came a-runnin'."

For a moment Ted's blood ran cold. The terrible story sounded very circumstantial. But he braced himself in his father's defense.

"Who were the men that told this story?" he asked.

"Well, none of them was anythin' to brag about," replied Ezra. "Si Flint kep' a cigar store an' a poolroom. Jack Sonn wuz a sport an' did bookmakin' on the sly. Jim Harrow was a laborer, drunk a good deal of the time, an' he wuz pretty well lit up that night. But they all told the same story, an' of course

there was nothin' for the constable to do but arrest Scott. You see that, don't you?"

"I suppose he had to, under the circumstances," agreed Ted. "But after all, the only positive evidence against him was that of these men. If they were lying, he might have explained away the rest of it."

"Sure," conceded Ezra. "But why should they lie about it? They didn't seem to have any grudge against Scott."

"How many shots had been fired from Scott's revolver?" asked Ted.

"Jest one," replied Ezra. "The revolver was fully loaded, except for that."

"But you say you heard two shots," broke in Ted. "How was that? That would seem to carry out Scott's story."

He waited breathlessly for the reply.

"Yes," replied Ezra, pulling meditatively at his whiskers. "I said that when the fust hearin' was on. An' I was countin' on sayin' the same thing when the reg'lar trial came on. But I seemed to be the only one that heard them two shots, an' the three other fellers swore there was only one. Some folks figgered that it wuz the echo of the one shot against the wall of the alley that made it soun' to me like two. Mebbe it wuz. But I don't think so."

## CHAPTER IX

### Was He Guilty?

Ted Scott felt a terrible depression at his heart as he realized the net of circumstances in which his father had been involved. He could easily see how it might impress a jury.

"The town wuz terr'bly excited about it, of course," went on the old man. "Everybody wuz het up an' takin' sides, but mos' of 'em thought, jest as I do, that Raymond Scott wuz innocent."

This was balm to Ted's sore heart. He warmed toward the old fellow.

"Only, of course," Ezra continued, "the case surely did look black. This is the way the folks that believed he wuz guilty figgered it out: Scott needed money, needed it desp'rit. Elverson had that money. Scott was the only one that knew he had it. Scott knew that Elverson wuz goin' to a blowout that night an' would get home late. An' Scott knew that Elverson's way home would take him past the bank buildin'. Scott hid in the alley and shot

him. He rushed out to grab the wallet an' had it in his hand when the fellers nabbed him. An' on top o' that wuz the direc' testimony of them three fellers that they saw Scott fire the shot. An' there wuz a bullet missin' from Scott's revolver. There ain't no denyin' that it seemed to be a strong case. Is there now?''

''It seemed so,'' Ted had to admit.

''Course, Scott explained that he tore open the man's coat to feel of his heart,'' Tompkins went on, ''an' that soun's reason'ble enough. Then his character would have helped him, if he had come to trial. No man stood higher in this here town than Raymond Scott. An' it might have been, as he said, that he'd fired at the burglars, if they was burglars, an' it wuz their shot at him that missed him an' struck Elverson jest as he happened to be passin'. But the hardes' thing to git aroun' would have been them fellers swearin' that they saw him do the killin'.''

''They may have had a motive in doing that,'' declared Ted. ''From what you say, they seem to have been a worthless lot. Who knows what might have prompted them to lie?''

''That's right,'' agreed Ezra. ''An' a smart lawyer might have got them all tangled up when it came to cross examination, if the trial had ever been held. But poor Scott died in prison. Pneumony, they said it wuz, but more likely a broken heart. Lucky his wife was

dead. But he had a cute little kid, an' he wuz probably worryin' more about him than he wuz about himself."

"What about these three men?" asked Ted. "Are they living here now?"

"No," was the reply. "One of them, Jack Sonn, is dead. Drank himself to death, they say. Jim Harrow and Si Flint cleared out about a year after Scott died. I heard that they went out to Californy somewheres. Don't know whether Flint is livin' or not, but Harrow is; that is, he wuz up to a couple o' years ago. Fren' of mine told me he seen him workin' on the docks in one of the Californy towns, I jest misremember which.

"Curi'us thing about that Flint," he went on. "I told you that he kep' a cigar store an' a poolroom. Low-down joint it wuz, an' some years ago it wuz pulled down to make room for a big buildin'. In the wreckin' of it, the workmen came across a lot of queer things, jimmys, skeleton keys an' sich. May have been Flint's or some of the fellers that made a hangout of the place. There's no tellin'."

"That wouldn't have helped Flint any, if it had been known at the trial," said Ted.

"Not a bit," agreed Ezra. "I was honin' for some smart lawyer to git hold of that feller. I never had no use for him, nohow."

"These fellows said they were coming from a barbecue," Ted observed. "Was that

checked up on? Does any one know they were really there?"

"Yes," replied Ezra. "They wuz there, right enough. A lot of fellers remembered seein' 'em."

"But that might have been just to establish an alibi," said Ted, pursuing a thought that had come to him. "Does any one know what time they left the barbecue?"

"That I couldn't say," replied the old man. "Don't know whether that wuz looked up or not. There wuz a good deal of drinkin' in them times at such affairs, an' likely no one noticed much what time other folks went away.

"But I got to report for duty now," the old man said, as he rose to his feet. "I'm afeerd I've talked you deef, dumb an' blind, but I wanted to show you that Grantville ain't so slow but what it has a shootin' once in a while, jest like other places."

"I'm sure it's been very interesting," returned Ted, as he shook the hand that the old man extended. "I'll be in town for some days, and I hope I'll have the pleasure of seeing you again."

For a long time after the old man had left him Ted sat engrossed in deep and painful thought.

He had been more fortunate than he had dared to hope in having fallen in with a man who had almost been an eyewitness of the

crime. But what he had learned left him in a state of bewilderment.

He tried to put himself in the place of a juryman, called on that trial, if it had ever taken place. Suppose he had taken his place in the box, with no interest in Scott and concerned only with doing justice. Suppose the evidence presented for the prosecution and the defense had been substantially as the old man had presented it. Suppose the cross examination had developed no serious contradictions. What would he decide to be the truth?

Would he have voted to acquit Raymond Scott? Or would he have voted to send him to the electric chair?

On the one side would have been Scott's desperate need of money, his knowledge that Elverson had it, his additional knowledge that Elverson would pass the bank at that lonely hour, the fact that he was found bending over the dead man with the wallet in his hand. What would have been easier than for Scott to figure that he could hastily go back to the bank, pretend that he was still busy with his work, and then, when the shot had brought others to the scene, appear at the door, horrified, and mingle with the others about the dead man. He could say that he had heard the shot, but figured that it was the blowing out of a tire on somebody's automobile and given it no further thought.

Ted could imagine how impressively the prosecuting attorney would have presented these facts to the jury as establishing motive, and then how triumphantly he would clinch the matter by the testimony of three alleged eyewitnesses of the shooting.

On the other hand, what would have been Scott's defense? He would have admitted frankly that he was in need of money. But plenty of men need money without dreaming of getting it by murder. The fact that he alone knew that Elverson had drawn that large sum was a mere accident, due to the fact that it was after hours and no one else was around. Nor could he help it that Elverson's way home lay past the doors of the bank nor that he was going home after midnight.

It was true that he had fired his pistol, but it was at hidden miscreants who had first fired at him. It was the bullet one of them had fired that had missed Scott and hit Elverson. It was true, too, that he held Elverson's wallet in his hand when arrested, but it had fallen from the dead man's breast pocket when he had torn open his coat to feel his heart to learn whether he was indeed dead.

It would have been a reasonable and sound defense, and, backed by his previous good character, might have secured acquittal, if it had not been for the testimony of those three eyewitnesses!

Ah, there was the rub! Those three eye-witnesses!

Cut them out of the case, and no jury would ever have convicted Raymond Scott on the other evidence.

But how could they be cut out of the case? They had claimed actually to have seen the shooting. They were not a high type of men, to be sure. But was it conceivable that all should have united in swearing away the life of an innocent man, a man, too, against whom it appeared they had no personal grudge?

No, it was not conceivable. Except on one supposition.

And that was *that they themselves had killed Elverson, either deliberately or by mistake, and thought by accusing Scott they could divert suspicion from themselves.*

Ted jumped up from his seat and half started to run in the direction of the bank. Then he remembered his rôle, and walked slowly, although he was consumed with impatience.

He sauntered past the alley, and his keen eyes took in every detail of it.

On one side was the bank building, on the other a store equally high. At the back was a high stone wall. There was no egress to the other street.

Men hiding in that alley at night for any nefarious purpose would have no way of es-

cape from any one entering it at the open end. They could not scale that high wall. They could not get into the buildings at the side.

Did that explain why, if Raymond Scott's story were true, a rascal, feeling himself trapped, would fire when they saw him approaching?

Were Si Flint, Jim Harrow and Jack Sonn in that alley on the night that Elverson was killed?

## CHAPTER X

### Old Enemies

Ted Scott's heart beat faster as the question took shape in his mind.

He could picture his father bent in horror and consternation over the dead man, concerned in helping him if possible. He could hear the running feet of the constable and Ezra Tompkins drawing nearer. He could see dark shadows slipping out of the alley, unnoticed by his father, who had no thought just then but for the man over whom he was bending. He could imagine the rascals taking immediate advantage of the wallet in the hands of Scott. Here was their chance to divert all inquiry from themselves. Fate had delivered a victim into their hands.

Thus it was that Ted reconstructed the scenes of that terrible night. It was only a theory, and he realized that it might seem stronger to him than it really was in his passionate desire to vindicate his father's name.

Still, as he went over it and tried to view it

coolly, he could detect few flaws in it. It was at least possible. He thought it was probable.

There, too, was the fact that the old man had mentioned the skeleton keys and jimmies found in the débris of Flint's torn-down place. What kind of man was he who had such sinister implements in his possession?

In any event he must find these men. One of them, Sonn, was dead. But the other two, as far as he knew, were yet alive. Somewhere on the Pacific coast, Tompkins had said. Well, he would scour that coast from end to end in search of them before he would admit defeat.

For two days more he pursued his inquiries as fully as he could without revealing his identity or purpose. He chatted with men on the docks, with the clerks at the hotels, with farmers in the fields just beyond the town, with the men that drove the busses to and from the station.

Beginning with some casual remark, he would gradually lead the conversation in the direction that he desired. Naturally, the recollections of many were hazy as to details. None of them were as full in their revelations as Tompkins had been. And none had been eyewitnesses of the affair.

Ted had counted much on the evidence of the constable who had made the arrest, but, to his chagrin, learned that the man had died six months before. A similar disappointment

awaited him when he looked up the name of the lawyer who had been employed by his father to undertake his defense. He had died only a year after his client. Two important avenues of information were thus closed to him forever.

In the public library he found a back file of the town paper with a full account of the tragedy. In this he found one detail that Tompkins had omitted. That was that the bullet found in Elverson's body corresponded with the others remaining in Scott's revolver. Ted found that much had been made of this in the proceedings before the grand jury that resulted in his father's indictment.

This did not, however, shake Ted's conviction of his father's innocence. It looked bad of course, but it was not conclusive. The revolver used by the miscreant hiding in the alley might easily have been of the same make and calibre.

One thing cheered him to some extent. That was the evidence, found in the columns of the paper, that the best and most intelligent part of the townspeople had believed firmly in Scott's innocence, despite the apparent strength of the case against him. The majority seemed to regard him as a victim of malign circumstances, and gave full credit to his own account of the shooting.

Another thing in the old records was of

service. For, as he turned over the files for a considerable period after the commission of the crime, he saw a little paragraph which stated that James Harrow and Silas Flint had left Grantville with the expressed purpose of going out to San Diego, California.

That gave him a definite starting point for his inquiries. There was, of course, no certainty that they were still in that town. There was no certainty even that they were still alive. A great many things could have happened in nearly twenty years.

What Ted had gathered in his random conversations had been anything but favorable to the men. Those who remembered them at all spoke of them slightingly, sometimes with a sneer. They had evidently held a low place in the opinion of their fellow-citizens.

This was especially true in the case of Flint. He, it seemed, had been the more determined character, a natural ringleader among the lower element of the town. His place had been a resort of suspicious characters, and although there was no evidence that he had ever come in conflict with the police or the law, he was regarded as one who would bear a good deal of watching.

Harrow seemed to have been almost negligible, weak, easily led and addicted to drink. For him there was a careless contempt in the tone of those who spoke of him. For Flint

there was a more pronounced antipathy, and this had been deepened by the discovery, years afterward, of those disreputable implements in the ruins of his place.

Yes, it was Flint that Ted was especially anxious to find. Harrow, too, if he could, but especially Flint.

On the third day of his stay Ted visited the town cemetery. He had learned from the papers that both his parents had been buried there. It was with deep emotion that Ted began the search for their graves.

He looked first among the graves that were most neglected and overgrown with weeds, those whose friends or families had long since moved away. But he did not find them there.

Somewhat bewildered, he prosecuted his search farther, and at last came to a little enclosure in which was a headstone that bore the name of Scott.

Alice Scott! The name of his mother, that mother whom he had never seen, the mother who had died at his birth.

His eyes filled with tears, and for a time he gave full vent to his feelings.

When he could see more clearly he noted beneath his mother's name that of his father, Raymond Scott, with the date of his death.

In their death at least those two who had loved and suffered were not divided!

When at last he gained control of himself,

he was struck with the beautiful condition of the place. The two mounds were carefully shaped and covered with grass closely cut and like green velvet. Flowers were planted here and there, and their condition betokened affectionate care and tending. No plot in the cemetery was more lovely.

Who had done this? Who was still doing it? Ted longed ardently to know.

He had planed to leave Grantville that evening, but before he went he looked up Ezra Tompkins, finding him, as he had expected, on his favorite bench in the park.

"So you're goin'," he said, after Ted had announced his intention. "I'm sorry, 'cause we've had many a pleasant talk together. " 'Fraid, though, I've tired you sometimes with my gab. When I get chinnin' I don't always know when to stop. Leastways, that's what my old lady tells me."

"Don't you believe it," replied Ted. "I don't know when I've enjoyed myself more than I have in talking with you."

"S'pose you've seen a good deal of Grantville, by an' large, since you've been here," said Ezra, as he stuffed some fresh tobacco into his pipe.

"Almost all of it, I guess," replied Ted. "Even the cemetery. I just came from there."

"Pretty place," remarked Ezra.

"It is," agreed Ted. "One thing struck me

as rather surprising. I was strolling along and I noticed a headstone with the name of Scott upon it. Raymond Scott and Alice Scott. I suppose they were the ones you were telling me about?"

"Yes," replied Ezra. "But what wuz there about it that wuz surprisin'?"

"The way the plot was kept," replied Ted. "I supposed it would be neglected and overgrown after all these years. But it's a perfect little gem of beauty. Could they possibly have some relatives here?"

"No," answered Ezra. "But they lef' some frens behind 'em, one at least. The fac' is, I've looked after the plot. I always did like potterin' among plants an' flowers, an' it gives me somethin' to do on Sunday afternoons. An' I says to myself, an' the old lady agrees with me, that them poor young things ought to have some one to look after their graves. We both thought a heap uv 'em when they was alive."

Ted felt a sudden lump in his throat and could not trust himself to speak.

"You see," Ezra went on, not noting his companion's emotion, "Mr. Scott wuz awful good to me when I was janitor in the bank. Never uppity jest because he was cashier an' I wuz only the janitor. Did me little kindnesses a hundred times. An' when my old lady was sick, Mrs. Scott was often bringin' her jellies an' sich an' sometimes sittin' up all

night with her. She was a lovely lady. So it's little enough for me to do what I kin to keep their graves green. Seems like they might rest a little easier."

Ted was thankful that his thick colored glasses concealed the tears with which his eyes were full, and he resolved then and there to keep a watchful eye on the fortunes of Ezra and his "old lady" as long as they lived.

He still had time after leaving the old man to look up the real estate records of the town and find that there was a mortgage on the Tompkins home.

A week later that mortgage was cleared off without their ever knowing how, affording a topic of endless bewilderment and guesswork to the old couple for the rest of their lives.

For the present, Ted Scott's work in Grantville was done, and during the long journey home he had ample time to sum up the results of that visit.

On the whole he had accomplished more than he might reasonably have expected, especially considering the long lapse of years. He had gained a clear conception of the locality of the crime. He had secured the names of the principal witnesses and a clue—a faint clue to be sure, but still a clue—to the general region in which they might be found.

His heart was oppressed by the weight of the evidence that had caused his father's ar-

rest. It was formidable enough, in all conscience. But he had grown more and more convinced of his father's innocence, and had formed a theory that he was sure would account reasonably for all the facts.

He had removed his disguising glasses and the other marks that had helped him to conceal his identity soon after leaving Grantville, and it was in his own proper person that he was returning to his home.

It was late at night when he reached Bromville and few people were abroad. But as he was traversing a deserted street he saw coming toward him a roistering couple considerably the worse for drink.

They took up a good deal of the sidewalk and Ted had to step to one side to avoid them. There was a street lamp near by, and by its light he saw that the couple were Greg and Duck Gale.

They recognized the young aviator at the same time and stood still, staring at him stupidly. Then Greg laughed raucously.

"Look out for a bullet, Duck," he warned.

"Thash so," chuckled Duck. "You can expect anything from the son of a murderer!"

## CHAPTER XI

### A Merited Thrashing

At this insult hurled at him by Duck Gale, Ted Scott whirled on his heel like a flash and confronted the evil pair.

"What's that you said, Duck Gale?" he demanded, his eyes ablaze with rage.

Duck shrank back.

"You heard me," he muttered sullenly.

"Yes. And because I heard you I'm going to thrash you within an inch of your life unless you take it back," declared Ted. "Quick now!"

If the twins had been sober, discretion would have counseled a prompt compliance. But they had been imbibing freely and that gave them a certain degree of spurious courage. Besides this, they were two against one.

"Why should I take it back?" asked Duck. "It's true, isn't it?"

"It's not true!" stormed Ted, advancing with his fists clenched. "Take it back."

"Won't take it back," burst out Greg in

drunken rage. "Duck's right. You're the son—"

He got no further, for Ted's fist shot out like a piledriver, caught Greg on the chin and knocked him clear off his feet.

Without waiting to see the effect of the blow, Ted lashed out at Duck and sent him staggering back for several yards.

But the twins rallied and came back, and in a moment the three were at it hammer and tongs.

The Gales were each as big and heavy as Ted, but their muscles were flabby with dissipation, while Ted's were like iron. He went around them like a cooper round a barrel, avoiding their wild efforts and dealing them terrific blows that soon took all the fight out of them.

In two minutes they were half-lying, half-seated on the ground, whimpering with pain and rage.

"Get up and take some more," urged Ted. "I've only begun to fight. Stand up and I'll knock you down again."

But the twins stayed where they were.

"You pair of yellow dogs!" exclaimed Ted contemptuously. "I'm ashamed of having soiled my hands with you. I've owed you this ever since you tried to run me down in your car. And you, Duck, I'm not through with you yet. What made you say what you did

just now—that I was the son of a murderer?"

There was no answer.

"Come now," adjured Ted. "Out with it, or I'll yank you to your feet and smash you into pulp. What made you say that?"

"I heard it from your own lips," was the startling reply.

Ted stood petrified. Had he heard aright?

"Wha—what's that?" he stammered.

"I heard you say it yourself," Duck repeated sullenly.

Ted's head was whirling. He could not conceive what the fellow meant. Yet there was a certain triumph in Duck's tone that seemed to imply a reserve force behind it.

"When and where did you hear anything of the kind?" he asked.

"You were on the porch of your own hotel the other night," replied Duck. "I happened to be passing, and I heard you talking to old Eben and Charity about going East to some place where you said your father had been arrested for murder."

So that was it! Ted thought of the bushes beside the porch. Oh, why had he been so ill-advised as to discuss the matter on the veranda? Why had he not taken the old folks to his room or gone himself to theirs? He berated himself bitterly.

All the trouble he had taken to disguise himself as he pursued his researches! All gone

for nothing! The secret was out. The fat was in the fire. And all through his own fault! That knowledge he would have given everything he had in the world to conceal was now in the hands of his worst enemies.

"So you just happened to be passing," he sneered, and there was a contempt in his voice that would have blistered any one less thick-skinned than the Gale twins. "Hiding in the bushes, you mean. Eavesdropping!"

"Nothing of the kind," denied Duck, secretly rejoicing as he sensed his foe's discomfiture.

"Now here are the facts," said Ted. "It is true my father was arrested on circumstantial evidence. He died before trial. If he had lived, he would have been acquitted. I'm convinced of that. I went down there to get the facts that would clear his memory. I expect soon to be able to do it. Now tell me this, Duck Gale. Have you ever mentioned this thing to anybody else?"

"N-no," stammered Duck, avoiding Ted's blazing eyes.

"Then see that you don't," Ted adjured him. "If you do, the licking I gave you tonight is a mere shadow of the one I'll give you the next time I catch you. Get me?"

The pair made no reply except a growl, and Ted left them there and went on toward home.

His heart and brain were in a tumult. He

had no confidence in Duck's statement that he had not mentioned the matter to anybody. That would have been too sweet a morsel of gossip to keep to himself. No doubt he had crowed over it to his boon companions, and by this time it was all over town.

But Ted was not one to waste his time in vain regrets. What was done was done. All the more reason that he should do all in his power to bring the real facts to light and vindicate his father's name.

He was greeted joyfully by Eben and Charity. But after the first embrace Charity gave a startled exclamation, as she noticed a bruise on Ted's cheekbone where one of Greg's wild swings had taken effect.

"Why, Ted, you're hurt!" she cried. "Did you knock against something?"

"Nothing worse than a fist," Ted reassured her. "Had a little set-to with Greg and Duck Gale on the way up from the station."

"What did they do to you?" asked Charity.

"Nothing much," laughed Ted.

"Better ask what Ted did to them," suggested Eben, grinning.

"Enough, I guess," agreed Ted. "They were half drunk and insulted me, and I had to teach them a lesson."

He did not go into further details, for they would probably hear the gossip soon enough, and he wanted to spare them as much as pos-

sible. Besides, there was a bare chance that people would refrain from speaking to them about it, for almost everybody was a friend to Eben and Charity Browning.

Naturally the old folks were keenly anxious to know the result of his trip, and when they were safely behind closed doors Ted opened his heart to them, holding back nothing.

They listened with pained interest, interrupting now and again with questions, and Charity sighed softly when he spoke of his father's and mother's graves.

"The poor young things!" she murmured as she rocked to and fro. "The poor young things!"

The recital left the Brownings as strongly impressed as Ted himself with his father's innocence. But they recognized fully the difficulties that lay before Ted in attempting to prove it.

They made no attempt to dissuade him from putting into operation his plan of trying to get on the track of Harrow and Flint.

"This thing has started now, and you might as well follow it to a finish," said Eben. "Good luck go with you, my boy!"

In going about town the next day, Ted was conscious of a change in the atmosphere. It was not that people were less cordial to him than they had been before. They were even more so, effusively so, as though they wished to

assure him that no matter what happened he was still the idol of the town. At times though he could catch a glance of commiseration directed toward him.

He knew what it meant. Duck and Greg had done their work well. Gossip was busy at work. How long would it be before the papers got hold of it?

In the afternoon, Mr. Hapworth, who had come to town to take part in a golf tournament, dropped in to see the young aviator at the Bromville House.

"What's the matter, Ted?" asked Mr. Hapworth, after the first greetings were over. "You don't seem like yourself."

Ted looked into his friend's eyes and saw something there that prompted his reply.

"Can't you guess?" he asked.

They read each other's thoughts clearly, and Mr. Hapworth did not dodge the question.

"I think I can," he said sympathetically. "You've heard some miserable gossip that pained you."

"Gossip started by Greg and Duck Gale?" asked Ted.

Mr. Hapworth nodded.

"Yes," he said. "You can always depend on those birds of evil omen to carry the seeds of mischief. They've been eavesdropping, I suppose, and overheard something that they're distorting for their own ends in order to put you in

as uncomfortable a position as possible. You know they hate you like poison, anyway."

"I know," said Ted. "And now, I suppose, they'll hate me worse than ever, because I sure gave them a drubbing last night."

"Did you?" exclaimed Mr. Hapworth delightedly. "I'd like to have you do that once a day regularly. They're the most contemptible skunks I ever ran across."

"Well, since you've heard the gossip they've been spreading, you might as well know the truth," said Ted, and to this true and tried friend he poured out the whole story.

Mr. Hapworth listened with the keenest interest and sympathy.

"I honor you for trying to clear your father's name, Ted," he said, "and I think you have every reason to believe in his innocence. I certainly hope you'll be able to prove it. In the meantime, you just go about your work as though nothing had happened. Forget all about this miserable gossip. I'll do all I can to spike it in this town."

"But if the newspapers get hold of it, it will be spread all over the country," declared Ted.

"They may possibly get hold of it, but that doesn't say they'll print it," returned Mr. Hapworth. "They all honor and respect you, and they won't want to cause you pain. They'll feel that, even if the gossip be true, it's nothing that you could help or be responsible for.

You've no idea how much the newspapers know that the public never gets hold of. So just buck up, Ted, and forget all about it."

"I'll try to," promised Ted, greatly cheered by this view of the matter.

"The best way to keep from brooding is to occupy your mind with something else," went on his friend. "And that brings up a thing I've been meaning to speak to you about for some time. What's the matter with you undertaking this flight from San Francisco to Hawaii? You've conquered the Atlantic. Why not go on and make the job complete by conquering the Pacific?"

"I've thought something of it," admitted Ted. "But I've been so engrossed with the other matter that I haven't got right down to it."

"Get down to it now, then," urged Mr. Hapworth. "You haven't got more than time to make your entry and build your plane. It's well worth trying for, my boy. Thirty-five thousand dollars to the winner and ten thousand to the man who comes in second. Then think of the prestige that would go with victory!"

It was certainly an alluring prospect, and Ted felt his sporting blood mounting.

"By ginger, I'll do it!" he declared.

"Put her there!" exclaimed Mr. Hapworth, extending his hand, which Ted grasped heartily.

"I'll build your plane for you at my factory on the coast."

"What's the matter with using the *Hapworth?*" asked Ted, who hated the idea of being severed from his beloved plane.

"Because you could save weight and space by building another," replied Mr. Hapworth. "You see when you were figuring on the Atlantic flight you had to count on from thirty-five to forty hours in the air and you had to carry that much more fuel in order to do it. But in this Hawaiian trip you need figure only on a little more than twenty-five hours in the air, if things break right. That will save you the extra weight of several hundred gallons of gasoline. See the point? Smaller tanks will be required. You can make the plane more compact."

Ted admitted the force of the reasoning.

"It's a go then!" exclaimed Mr. Hapworth jubilantly. "First stop Honolulu!"

## CHAPTER XII

### A Happy Slogan

"First stop Honolulu!"

It was a felicitous phrase and took Ted's fancy.

"First stop Honolulu!"

He could see himself winging his way over the vast wastes of the Pacific, like a seagull of passage, whizzing his way through the air like an arrow, his gaze intent for the first sight of land that would tell him he was approaching a little dot in the great expanse, the island paradise of the Pacific.

His eyes lighted with the fire of adventure.

"I'll get busy right away," he declared. "I'll make straight for Denver and get the necessary leave of absence. Then I'll fly to San Francisco and supervise the building of the plane."

"I'll be there almost as soon as you will," declared Mr. Hapworth, "and I'll wire at once to the factory to start work on the plane and to give you a free hand. They owed a lot to your

suggestions in making the *Hapworth,* and your tips now, with your added experience, will be more valuable than ever."

"That will be fine," replied Ted.

"One other thing," went on his friend. "What's the matter with taking me along?"

Ted stared at him in surprise.

"As a passenger?" he asked.

"No," replied Mr. Hapworth. "As an assistant. You to be the pilot and I to help with the navigation."

Ted's surprise deepened into bewilderment. Mr. Hapworth laughed.

"I know what you're thinking," he said. "You're wondering where I got any license to call myself a navigator. Aren't you? 'Fess up now."

"Why, yes," Ted admitted, with a smile. "I'd love to have you along in any capacity. But I didn't know that you'd been making a study of navigation."

"You're responsible for it," stated Mr. Hapworth. "You see, I used to think there was no sport in the world like golf. I'm still an addict, or I wouldn't be here to take part in this tournament. But ever since I met you I've had the flying germ. And, on the quiet, I've been learning how to fly. We have a number of good aviators at the factory, and they've been giving me lessons until I can handle a plane without any trouble. I've been making a thorough

study of navigation, too. I don't think I'd be dead wood in the plane, if you should take me along."

"That'll be fine!" declared Ted. "I'd like nothing better. But you know you're taking chances? It's no child's play to fly across the Pacific. It's a fifty-fifty chance that we won't get through it alive."

"I know it," assented Mr. Hapworth. "But I'm willing to take the risk. I go into it with my eyes open. It's the sense of danger that appeals to me. If we go down, we'll at least have had one glorious thrill before we die."

"That's a sporting way to look at it," returned Ted. "All right then, Mr. Hapworth, it's a bargain."

That very day he telegraphed his entry to the committee in charge of the contest, and followed it up with a letter.

The next morning, after an affectionate farewell to Eben and Charity, he lifted the *Hapworth* into the skies and set out on his return to Denver.

He had two subjects of thought to engross him during the long journey, and as the weather was ideal and the work of guiding the plane was reduced to a minimum, he could concentrate upon them thoroughly.

One of these was the forthcoming contest. His heart was thrilled by the danger to be faced and the laurels to be won. But he did not delude

himself as to the reality of the danger or the difficulty that would be attached to the winning of the laurels.

The chief difficulty in his mind lay in striking that small row of dots in the Pacific. His objective point was only three hundred miles wide, a row of pin points amid the thousands of square miles of that greatest of all the oceans. An error of merely a degree or two on his part would send the plane at least two hundred miles off the course, and that, with the limited supply of gasoline he would carry, would mean almost certain disaster.

On his trip across the Atlantic he had had the whole coast of Europe as a possible objective and was sure to strike it somewhere. But here, if he missed the Hawaiian Islands, he would be lost.

But he drew reassurance from the thought that he had struck the Irish coast within four miles of his aim, a miracle of navigation. What he had done once he felt reasonably sure he could do again.

Another thing that had to be taken into consideration was the number of competitors in this Pacific flight. Already nine planes had been entered and there probably would be more. He knew some of the airmen by reputation, plucky, skillful pilots who could give any man a race for his money. The winning of the prize would not be easily accomplished.

But more than with the contest his thoughts were taken up by something that lay still closer to his heart—the vindication of his father's name. That had become still more pressing in view of the fact that the secret was no longer his. If a storm should break, he wanted to be in a position to meet it.

He rejoiced that he was to be on the Pacific coast during the building of the plane. That would give him numerous opportunities of visiting various towns in that vicinity and digging out, if he could, some knowledge of the whereabouts of Jim Harrow and Si Flint, especially the latter.

It was a hearty welcome he received when at last he alighted on the flying field at Denver. After the first greetings were over, the enthusiasm of his companions was redoubled by his declaration that he was going to enter the air race across the Pacific.

"Can't keep a squirrel on the ground!" exclaimed Bill Twombley, as he clapped Ted on the shoulder. "I knew you wouldn't pass up a chance like that."

"You've got it sewed up already, Ted," declared Roy. "There's no one that has a license to race with you. It's only a question of who'll come in second."

"I don't know about that," replied Ted soberly. "There'll be some mighty good fliers in that contest."

"Already there's one less than there was," remarked Ed.

"Withdrawn?" asked Ted.

"Death withdrew him," put in Tom.

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Ted, with quick sympathy. "Who was it and how did it happen? I've been in the air, you know, and haven't had any news."

"Smashed yesterday," replied Tom. "Milton, his name was, Captain Milton. Fine fellow, too. British war ace with thirty-one enemy planes to his credit. He was circling round the field in practice about three hundred feet in the air when something went wrong with his plane. Went into a dive and he couldn't pull it out. Jumped when he was about a hundred and fifty feet from the ground, but he was too close and the parachute didn't open in time. Killed instantly. Wife was there and saw it, too. Bad business!"

"That was terrible!" exclaimed Ted.

"Sure was," agreed Tom. "He'd figured, too, that he had a big chance. Was a dandy flier and had a plane that cost twenty-two thousand dollars. They say it was capable of a hundred and forty-five miles an hour. Would have made the other fellows hustle to have beaten him. Well, that's that. Death has scratched him off the list. Just goes to show what a risky business we fellows are in. No one knows whose turn will come next."

"Right you are," agreed Ted soberly. "But we can only die once, and at least we die quickly."

To Tom Ralston, when he got him in private, Ted narrated the details of what he had discovered in Grantville. Tom paid close attention as he listened to the theory that Ted had reconstructed of the crime.

"Sounds mighty reasonable to me," he commented at the finish. "Of course, I was too much of a kid to remember those fellows, but I've heard my dad say many a time that they were no earthly good. Sonn and Flint especially. Harrow wasn't so tough as the others. Weak, you know, but not really bad; one of the drinking shiftless kind that would do anything his pals told him to, not knowing half the time what he was doing. The spine about as stiff as a chocolate éclair. Well, I wish you luck in finding them. Like looking for a needle in a haystack though, after all these years, Ted."

"I know it," agreed Ted. "It's a forlorn hope, but forlorn hopes have a way of winning through sometimes. At any rate, if I fail, it won't be for want of trying."

Ted Scott had no trouble in getting the requisite leave of absence from Maxwell Bruin, who, apart from his affectionate interest in Ted personally, was keenly alive to the prestige that would attach to his concern in case Ted should be declared a winner.

"And you will win," he declared confidently. "If I were a betting man, I'd put my last dollar on you."

"You might go bankrupt then," grinned Ted. "I'd chance that," declared Bruin. "I've seen a good deal of men, and I know a winner when I see one. The man who could fly the Atlantic and break the altitude record is good enough to carry my money."

In accordance with his previous promise, Ted also made a flying trip to the home of Frank and Bessie Bruin. He found them still in the heaven of their honeymoon, with Frank happier and Bessie more radiant than ever.

They were agog with interest in Ted's projected flight and ardent in their good wishes for his success.

"How about coming along with me, Frank?" Ted asked mischievously.

Bessie uttered a little scream of alarm and flew to her husband's side.

"Only over my dead body!" she declared firmly.

"You see how it is, Ted," grinned Frank. "My wife won't let me. You see how she's got me tamed already."

"I see," said Ted. "I was only kidding. I wouldn't go either, if I had such a wife to keep me at home."

"For which pretty speech you shall have a double dessert at dinner," laughed Bessie.

"That's what he was working you for," chaffed Frank.

The visit ended only too soon for both hosts and guest, but time was pressing and Ted reluctantly bade them good-by.

Two days later, amid a chorus of good wishes, the *Hapworth* soared into the sky and Ted Scott turned her nose toward the coast.

His eyes lighted and nerves tingled when at last he caught sight of the Pacific.

The mightiest of oceans!

Would he conquer it?

"I will!" he said aloud in answer to the unspoken question. "First stop Honolulu!"

## CHAPTER XIII

### Preparations

The airplane factory at San Francisco had received full instructions from Mr. Hapworth, the owner, and a special gang of skilled mechanics had been selected for the building of Ted Scott's plane. So with the young aviator's coming work started at once.

One thing Ted was determined on, and that was that, however the plane might differ in structural details from the *Hapworth*, it should have the same type motor as that which had carried the gallant monoplane across the Atlantic. That had acted beautifully, and, in the estimation of Ted, was without a peer.

The valves especially had worked to a charm. They were of the cupped head design with a hollow stem made from a solid forging. The stem was filled with a salt solution to promote more rapid dissipation of heat from the head to cooler portions. The hollowness of it also permitted a larger diameter and more wearing surface in the guide without appreciable

addition of weight, and they had a burnished finish all over.

"They're dandies," Ted declared to Mr. Hapworth, who arrived a day later than himself, full of elation at having won the golf tournament. "Do you know that some sharp has figured out that during my flight across the Atlantic each of the eighteen valves in the motor operated continuously with the center of the head red hot? Each valve opened and closed twelve times a second, or nearly a million and a half times during the trip, and withstood a similar number of eight hundred pounds explosive shocks. Do you know what that means for every valve?"

"No," laughed Mr. Hapworth. "I'm not much of an arithmetician. What does it mean?"

"For every valve," went on Ted, "that was the equivalent of a laborer striking fifty two-hundred-pound blows a minute with a sixteen pound sledge hammer for two and a half months!"

"Sounds impressive," was the reply. "Any valves that can stand that pounding are good enough for me."

Similar care was exercised by Ted in cooperation with the mechanics on every detail of the plane. The wings were made of laminated strata, extremely light, but almost as tough as iron, so tightly joined that they could

be boiled for days in water without separating. Every minute detail was attended to that would combine strength with buoyancy.

The latest life-saving and waterproofing appliances and devices were installed. The plane had a system that would convert her into a seagoing craft, if she were forced to descend upon the water. In the navigator's cabin was an air bottle, which carried pipe lines to the tip of each wing and the rear of the fuselage.

To keep the plane from bobbing about and possibly overturning in the sea, the extremities were fortified with three-ply wood, upon which could be placed heavy sandbags. Thick cork was packed in the bottom of the fuselage to keep the plane afloat.

The landing gear could be dropped into the sea by pulling out the bolts that held it. In addition, there was a rubber lifeboat with silken sails. The compass was detachable so that it could be transferred to the rubber boat, in case the plane had to be abandoned. In the lifeboat were paddles, flares and rockets.

Ted was determined that nothing that could be humanly guarded against should be left to chance. He was the more careful because in this case, unlike his Atlantic flight, there was another life than his own that had to be protected against the onset of wind and waves and other vicissitudes.

In the meantime, two other lives had paid

forfeit to their ambition. A pilot and his mechanic had crashed into a cliff that they had not lifted their plane quickly enough to surmount.

Still another tragedy was narrowly avoided when a plane refused to respond to its controls and lost its flying speed over the runway. In attempting to resume its flight the pilot jammed on his throttle and the ship was pulled to the left of the runway in a wide circle, narrowly missing sweeping a parked automobile off the highway as it flashed toward the waters of San Francisco Bay.

There was a cracking noise and a geyser of water shooting upward as the plane crashed into the bay. The occupants clambered on the fuselage and were rescued by boats near at hand. The plane was badly wrecked, and had the fall taken place in the open sea could not have been handled.

All these things were warnings that could not be disregarded. So serious were they, indeed, that the Department of Commerce took a hand and arranged for a postponement of the flight until the committee in charge should be fully satisfied that all the planes entered in the race were equipped in every way to undertake the hazardous journey. An examination showed that only four of the planes had their compasses properly swung for the reckoning of the course, and that the others would require

considerable time to make the necessary readjustments.

Ted Scott did not object at all to the postponement. His plane was by this time practically finished. Now he would have a few days in which he could prosecute his search for Harrow and Flint.

Since he was already in San Francisco, he made his first venture there. His search of the directories had revealed several Flints and Harrows, and he made it his business to see every one that he could. One or two, he found, had moved away. Others he could see at a glance were too young to be the one he sought. None of those whose names he had gathered proved the right ones.

His written lists proving unfruitful, he went down along the docks and made inquiries there. Harrow, he knew, had been a dock worker in Grantville. Here again he was doomed to disappointment.

He knew that he faced the possibility of either or both having changed their names since they had left Grantville. If that were so, he had absolutely no clue to go upon. But he told himself they would be little likely to do that, since they had not been under suspicion when they had left the old New England town.

Failing in San Francisco, he hopped off in the *Hapworth* for San Diego. This promised better results, for the name of that town had

been mentioned as the first destination of the men.

The promise was not wholly false, for after prolonged inquiry Ted did find two or three workmen who had known and labored alongside a Jim Harrow. They remembered a certain Flint, too, a friend of Harrow's, though not a manual worker. What his real occupation had been they did not know, except vaguely that it had been "somethin' in the sportin' line."

But both had left San Diego more than five years before. There was an impression, though no certainty, that they had gone to Los Angeles.

This, however, was something, and Ted lost no time in winging his way to that thriving city that disputed with San Francisco the honor of being the real metropolis of California.

On the second day of his arrival, after a feverish search in all possible quarters, Ted stumbled on something that revived his waning hopes.

"Jim Harrow?" repeated the boss of a gang of stevedores at one of the docks. "We had a Harrow here up to some time ago, but he took sick. Say, Flaherty," he called to one of his men, "what was that guy Harrow's first name, the feller that used to work here?"

"Jim," answered Flaherty.

"That may be the man I'm looking for," said

Ted eagerly. "Can you tell me where he lives?"

"Couldn't say," was the response. "But if you'll jest step into the office there, the time clerk can tell you from his books."

Ted did this and got his address.

"At least, that's where he did live when he was working for us," observed the clerk. "But I shouldn't wonder if he had passed out by this time. Had a pretty bad case of T.B. when he quit work for us."

Ted lost no time in making his way to the given address, which he found was a dilapidated tenement house in the poorest quarter of the town.

He knocked at a door on the fourth floor, and a haggard and sad-faced woman answered the knock.

"Does Mr. Harrow live here?" Ted asked, as the woman held the door half ajar.

"Yes," was the reply, as the woman scanned him carefully. "Are you from the landlord?"

"No," replied Ted, and a look of relief came on the woman's face.

"Come in then," she said dully. "But don't make any noise, for my husband is asleep. He gets so little that I don't like to wake him. He's awful sick with consumption."

"That's too bad," murmured Ted, as his eyes took in the desperate poverty of the room.

"I thought you was the landlord's man come

to put us out," went on the woman in the same monotonous tone. "I told him that Jim couldn't last more than a few days at most, but he said he couldn't help that, he'd have to have the rooms."

Ted's heart was touched. This poor woman, at any rate, had not committed any crime.

"How much do you owe the landlord?" he asked.

"Twelve dollars," she replied; "and I've only got thirty-nine cents in all the world."

Ted took a twenty-dollar bill from his pocket.

"Take this," he said. "It will pay the landlord when he comes and with the rest you can get some things you need."

The woman stared a moment, then that dead helplessness that had seemed to enwrap her broke and she burst into violent sobbing.

"Oh, the good Lord must have sent you here!" she cried. "Now poor Jim can die in his own home."

Ted rose.

"I'll come again in a couple of hours," he said. "Probably your husband will be awake by that time. He used to live in Grantville, didn't he?"

"Yes," the woman replied, her eyes opening wide with wonder. "But that was a long time ago. Did you know him there? But no, you couldn't have," she added. "You're too young."

"I've met some who did know him," replied Ted. "Now, I'll be going, but I'll be back soon," and before the woman could make any further inquiries he was on his way down the rickety stairs.

His heart was in a tumult. Was he at last on the verge of the discovery for which he had so long hungered?

Promptly at the stipulated time he was back again and was gladly admitted. There was a basket of provisions in the apartment and a savory smell of cooking. Ted noted a jar of jelly, doubtless designed for the sick man.

"Is your husband awake?" asked Ted.

"Yes," replied the woman, "and he's anxious to see you and thank you for being so good to us. Just wait a minute and I'll tell him you've come."

She vanished into the adjoining bedroom and returned a minute later.

"He'll see you now," she said.

## CHAPTER XIV

### As One from the Dead

Ted Scott followed the woman into the bedroom, which was quite as poverty-stricken as the rest of the apartment.

Propped up in bed was a man with an emaciated face and eyes bright with fever. It was evident at a glance that he was in the last stages of tuberculosis.

"Here is the gentleman who has been so kind to us, Jim," the woman said, as she drew up a chair for Ted near the side of the bed.

"I want to thank you," began the man. Then he stopped short and gazed at Ted with growing terror in his eyes.

"You! You!" he cried. "What are you doing here? I thought you were dead!"

He shrank back on the pillow and covered his face with his skeleton-like fingers.

"There, there, Jim," said his wife, patting him soothingly. "He gets that way sometimes," she said, turning to Ted. "Kind o' delirious like."

"I think I know what the trouble is," replied Ted.

He touched the sick man gently.

"I'm just flesh and blood, Mr. Harrow," he said. "You mistook me for my father, Raymond Scott."

The hands came down tremblingly from the haggard face.

"Raymond Scott's son!" he muttered. "You, the son of Raymond Scott?"

"Yes," replied Ted. "But I want you to get it right out of your mind that I mean you any harm. I can see that you're a very sick man, and even if I had any feeling of revenge, God has taken the matter out of my hands. I came here to get some information that I feel sure you can give me."

"Oh, he will, he will!" exclaimed the woman, clasping her hands. "You will, won't you, Jim? He's been so kind to us!"

The sick man seemed to be trying to steady himself.

"I'll tell you anything you want to know," he promised, after a moment. "I'm going to meet my God before long, and I don't want to do it with a wicked secret in my heart or a lie on my lips. I know what you want to find out. It's about that Elverson murder in Grantville."

"Yes, that's it," agreed Ted, his heart beating like a triphammer. "And I'm going

straight to the point. Did Raymond Scott kill Frederick Elverson?"

"No."

The denial went through Ted like an electric shock.

"You're sure of that?" he asked eagerly.

"Positive."

"Then who did kill him?" asked Ted, after a moment spent in gaining control of his voice.

"I—I don't know," and Harrow hesitated over this answer.

Ted was dumbfounded.

"But if you're so certain that my father didn't, I should think you would know who did!" he exclaimed.

"I know that one of two men shot him," exclaimed Harrow. "I'm not sure which one."

"Who were the two?" asked Ted.

"Si Flint and Jack Sonn," was the reply. "I know that one of them did the killing, but I couldn't swear which it was. I think, though, it was Flint."

"Tell me all about it," urged Ted, repressing excitement as much as he could in order not to tax the sick man too severely.

"It was this way—and may God forgive me for having any part in it," said Harrow. "This is the first time I've ever spoken of it, except to Flint and Sonn. Even Jenny here," indicating his wife, "doesn't know about it."

"Make a clean breast of it, Jim dear," said

the woman. "God will forgive you. I know that you wouldn't have done anything wrong, except for the drink."

"That's it, Jenny," the sick man said. "It was the drink. I never stole a dollar in my life, and I never had any idea of killing anybody."

He paused a moment to gather strength for his confession.

"You see," he said, "I went that night with Flint and Sonn to the barbecue. I drank more than was good for me, but they didn't drink much that night. Kept speaking to each other of a job they had on hand. We came away early and all went to Flint's place where they got a couple of revolvers and something in a can. Flint called it 'soup,' and it wasn't till later that I knew he meant by that nitroglycerine, the thing that bank burglars use to blow up safes.

"I asked them what they were going to do, and they told me I'd know soon enough and that for the time being my business was to do what they told me. Then Flint led the way to that alley, and we hid behind a pile of rubbish up at the further end. I was getting uneasy then and wanted to go home, but Flint wouldn't let me. He was nervous and ugly by that time, and he showed me a revolver and told me to keep quiet or he'd do for me."

The sick man paused for breath and his wife gave him a drink of water.

"I was so fuddled that I didn't know what to do," he resumed, "and while I was trying to make up my mind the lights went out in the bank, and a minute or two later your father came out. He stood for a minute listening. I could see him by the light of a street lamp. Then he put his hand in his pocket and pulled out something and came slowly up the alley. We lay low, thinking maybe he wouldn't come far. But he kept coming, and then either Sonn or Flint shot. Your father shot back, but he was firing in the dark and the bullet went wild. Then he looked around and saw something lying on the sidewalk, and he started running toward it."

Ted was listening breathlessly. Mixed with the horror at the story was a certain feeling of thankfulness and exultation. His father had told the exact truth! His poor father! No murderer, but a highminded gentleman of whom any son might feel proud!

"We were all rattled for a moment," went on Harrow, "and then Flint grabbed us and pulled us toward the entrance of the alley.

" 'It's our chance,' he said. 'Let me do the talking and you back me up.'

"When we got out there—your father didn't see us coming, for his back was toward us—others were running up too, Tompkins and a constable, and they found your father holding Elverson's wallet in his hands and—"

"I know the rest of what happened that night," broke in Ted. "Tompkins told me. But why, at the preliminary trial, didn't you tell the truth?"

"Because I was afraid for my own skin, God forgive me!" confessed Harrow hiding his face in his hands. "I didn't want to go to the chair."

"But you were willing to let an innocent man go," said Ted bitterly.

"No, no, Mr. Scott!" exclaimed Harrow earnestly. "Not that! I figured that with the story Mr. Scott had to tell and the good opinion the townsfolks had of him, that when it came to the regular trial the jury would have believed him and let him go free. That would have ended the matter. But I made up my mind that if the jury should convict him and there was no help for it, I'd come out and make a clean breast of it no matter what happened. You may believe it or not, but I'm a dying man and I'm telling you the truth. Raymond Scott would never have gone to the chair!"

There was a deadly earnestness in his tone that made Ted inclined to believe him.

"Have you got paper and pen and ink?" he asked of Mrs. Harrow.

She had not, so Ted ran down hastily to a stationery store and procured writing materials. Then he wrote out the details that

Harrow had given him, read them over to him, and asked if he were willing to sign the statement.

The man nodded his head, and Ted called in a couple of the neighbors to witness his signature, though they had, of course, no inkling of the contents of the paper.

Signed and witnessed, Ted, after thanking and dismissing the witnesses, folded the paper and put it carefully in his pocket.

His heart was singing with thankfulness. He had confirmed his own conviction of his father's innocence. He had secured very important evidence that, in default of more, would go far toward clearing his father's name.

But he wanted still further confirmation. Harrow was very near death. Probably he would be dead before Ted could make any use of the confession, and there might not be wanting those who would hint that perhaps by threats or bribery he had influenced the dying man to say whatever he wanted him to say.

So his next question concerned Flint.

"Do you know where Flint is now?" he asked.

Harrow shook his head.

"On the ocean somewhere, I think," he replied. "The last time I saw him was about a week ago. He came here to see me. He said then that he thought he'd light out for Austra-

lia. But he said he'd stop at Honolulu for a while, and if he liked it and got the right kind of a job, he might stay there."

At Honolulu! And Ted himself expected to be there in a few days if he had luck.

"What makes you think that Flint, instead of Sonn, fired the shot that killed Elverson?" Ted asked.

"Because he was the leader," replied Harrow. "Sonn wouldn't have been likely to make a move on his own account unless Flint told him to, and Flint hadn't said a word before the shot was fired. Then, there's another thing that makes me sure that Flint did it."

"What's that?" asked Ted.

"From the way he's acted since then," replied the sick man. "He hasn't been the same man. Got to be afraid of ghosts, the ghost of Elverson and the ghost of your father. Had the most awful nightmares and woke up all in a sweat. Used to be a big, bulky man and now he's worn down something dreadful. Always looking around when he's walking anywhere in the dark. He wouldn't have been that way if it had been Sonn that did the shooting. No sir, it was Si Flint that did it. Course, I couldn't swear to it, but I'm mortal sure of it in my own mind."

A fit of coughing seized the man, and the woman sent an imploring look toward Ted.

"Just one thing more," said Ted, as he rose

to his feet. "Do you know what steamer Flint went on?"

"He said he was going on the *Waikiki* if he could make it," was the reply. "I can give you the address of the place he was living in last, and perhaps they can tell you."

Ted hastily scribbled down the address that Harrow gave him.

"I don't suppose you can find it in your heart to forgive me for the wrong I've done you and yours," Harrow said wistfully. "Seems to me I could die a little easier if you did."

Ted hesitated. It was hard to forgive so great a wrong. But the man was dying, and he had tried to make amends.

"I forgive you," he said, and hastily left the room.

Outside the sick chamber, he stopped for a moment to speak to the woman. He took from his pocket several bills.

"Take these," he said, as he thrust them into her hands. "I'll send you more later on to pay the funeral expenses and get you back to your folks in the East if you want to go."

The woman tried chokingly to express her gratitude, but Ted hurried down the stairs and made his way to the address that Harrow had given him.

There he found that Flint had indeed left on the *Waikiki,* an Australian boat that was

scheduled to stop at Honolulu. As to what his plans were the boarding-house keeper knew nothing and cared less.

It was with a jubilant heart that Ted took the next train to San Francisco. He had achieved more than he had dared to hope. He had secured explicit testimony as to his father's innocence of the crime with which he had been charged and he was on a warm trail of the man who he believed had done the killing.

"No need of asking you if you've had any luck," were Walter Hapworth's first words as he greeted him. "I can see it in your face."

"Right you are," replied Ted, and went on to tell in detail the story of his trip.

"Good!" exclaimed Hapworth when Ted had finished. "You couldn't have hoped for more. So Flint has shipped from the country, has he? Let's look up the steamer list and see when the *Waikiki* sailed."

They found that the steamer was due in Honolulu a day or two before Ted could be expected to reach it.

"I'll find him!" exclaimed Ted.

"That is, if he stops off there," warned Mr. Hapworth. "Don't get your hopes raised too high, Ted. He may go on to Australia."

"Then I'll follow him to Australia," declared Ted. "I'll follow him to the ends of the earth!"

## CHAPTER XV

### On the Wing

"The judges couldn't have picked out a nicer day for the start," remarked Mr. Hapworth two days later, as the airplanes that were going to compete in the race were lined up at the Oakland airport, directly across the bay from San Francisco.

"Right you are," assented Ted, as he gazed up at the azure sky. "Hardly a breath of wind, and what there is is in the right direction."

"Let's hope that Nature isn't just kidding us along," laughed Mr. Hapworth.

"Wouldn't put it past her," returned Ted, grinning. "We may run into a typhoon before the journey's over. But if we do, I guess we'll be able to ride it."

"Which of the planes are going to give us the strongest competition, do you think?" asked Mr. Hapworth, as he ran his eye over the contestants.

"Hard to say," replied Ted; "but just at a

guess I should say that the *Comanche* with Coit and Broasen to handle her and the *Red Eagle* with Foy and Mallenger at the controls are the ones we'll have to beat. I know those boys, and they're dandy fliers. There isn't any part of the game they don't know. As to the others, all we can say is that they have a chance."

The order in which the planes were to start had been determined by lot, and Ted Scott had drawn number five, the last but one. But as the racers were to leave at two minute intervals, the start that any one of them got over the others would not count for much in such a long distance race.

There was bustle now on the field as the officials pressed back the crowds from the runway, and the first starter, the *Arrow,* was trundled into place.

The signal was given and the plane started down the runway. It seemed at first to have some difficulty in getting up speed, and the spectators were breathless with suspense. But, after it had gone three thousand feet, it took a sudden spurt, and a few hundred feet further on the pilot lifted it into the air. It went up and up, rapidly gaining elevation, and soared off into the blue.

A cheer went up at this auspicious beginning of the race. But two minutes later there was a thrill of terror as a tragedy impended.

The *Wyoming,* although it started at a rapid

pace, was hampered by a side wind that made it hard to get the rudder into action. Twice it seemed about to rise, but fell back. Then, after four thousand feet had been traversed, the right wing tipped downward. The plane did a ground loop, skidded to one side, and came to an abrupt stop in a slight hollow, a hundred feet off the runway, with the nose turned almost directly back toward the starting point.

The right wing was smashed and the fuselage caved in, but the men on board were unharmed. They climbed out of the wreckage with tears in their eyes. All the work and hope, the dreams and ambitions of weeks and months past, had come to nothing in a twinkling.

"Too bad!" murmured Ted, with deep sympathy.

"Still, they're alive," replied Mr. Hapworth, as he saw the wives of the aviators rushing frantically toward their husbands to assure themselves that they were not hurt.

The third take-off, that of the *Comanche,* was in the most approved flying style. It roared down the runway for about three thousand feet, and then, with no perceptible effort, soared into the air and turned its nose toward the Pacific.

"Wasn't that pretty?" exclaimed Ted admiringly. "That was Coit at the joy stick. That fellow will bear watching."

"He knows his business, all right," assented his companion.

The next plane was not so fortunate. The *Falcon,* as it was named, was in trouble from the start. It simply couldn't carry its load. It waddled painfully from side to side and finally lifted for about ten feet, and then came down heavily with a splintered tail stick, putting it apparently out of the race.

It was hustled off the runway and then Ted's plane, the *Silver Streak,* was rolled to the starting point.

A deafening roar of applause went up from the crowd, for Ted Scott, because of his previous exploits and his nation-wide popularity, was a pronounced favorite.

The blocks were knocked away and the *Silver* Streak justified its name by the way it whizzed down the runway and at a distance of about twenty-five hundred feet soared into the air like a bird, its sheathing gleaming in the sun.

"First stop Honolulu!" cried Ted in exultation, as he felt the rush of air against his face and settled down at the controls for the long flight across the Pacific wastes.

Below him he could see the seals disporting themselves on the rocks at the entrance of the Golden Gate. Ahead of him stretched that seemingly illimitable expanse of water. He would not see land again until he sighted that

small row of dots in the Pacific known as the Hawaiian Islands.

And because it was so small a row of dots he knew how easy it would be to miss it.

There was the possibility of fog so enshrouding the islands that he might fly clear over them. There was the further possibility of the earth inductor compass, on which he placed his chief reliance, failing him at the critical moment. To these were added all the chances of storm and lightning, breaks in the structure of the plane, and a forced landing on the surging seas.

But if there were no possibilities of disaster there would be no glory of achievement, so he resolutely dismissed all forebodings from his mind and set himself to the task of guiding his plane.

He tested various altitudes for the wind and, finding it was blowing most strongly on the lower strata, he flew at a height of about five hundred feet above the surface of the water.

He had not gone far before he saw one of the planes returning. He could not tell what had happened to it, but he could see that it was being navigated with difficulty. He checked the speed of his own plane somewhat, so as to be at hand in case of need, but as he saw that it continued on its course, he ploughed forward again at full speed.

That made one contestant less in the race

and to that degree bettered his own chances. But this brought him no satisfaction. He was a generous foeman and wanted nothing that was due solely to the ill-luck of a rival. The more contestants the merrier and may the best man win was his motto.

He knew, however, that the *Comanche* still kept the air, for he could catch an occasional glimpse of sunlight on wings a couple of miles ahead of him.

And, glancing back, he could see that the *Red Eagle* had also taken off and was coming on in pursuit. So the two planes he considered most formidable as contestants were still in the race—a triangular one from present appearances!

Mr. Hapworth was seated behind Ted. There was a tube extending between them for the transmission of messages. Conversation would have been difficult if not impossible because of the roaring of the motor. Each had a pad of paper and a pencil attached by a string to the wrist so that when it became desirable to communicate either one of them could scribble a message and send it through the tube.

Ted guided his course by consulting the instruments on the board ahead of him. Mr. Hapworth had a sextant and other instruments for taking the position of the sun by day and the stars by night. He had developed efficiency

in their use, and Ted knew that he could rely on his friend's deductions.

If the earth inductor compass functioned perfectly, that would be sufficient to guide the plane aright. But if it should develop trouble, the calculations made by Mr. Hapworth might prove their salvation.

For the first hundred miles they were frequently in sight of the ships engaged in coastwise traffic. Once they overtook a liner bound for Japan, and, a little later, met one coming in on the long journey from Australia.

After that the ships were few and far between. For the Pacific is much less traversed by ships than the Atlantic, and soon there was nothing to be seen but that great tumbling expanse of waters.

Then to a greater extent than ever did the daring voyagers realize that they had indeed cut the links that bound them to human society. Except for each other, they were lonely travelers in immensity.

They had raced ahead of the *Comanche,* and the *Red Eagle* was lost to sight behind them. This was gratifying as far as it went, but Ted Scott did not delude himself into the belief that it meant very much at that early stage of the race. It might have signified simply that he had struck a current of air that carried him along faster than the others. Later on they might have similar luck and equalize matters.

The *Silver Streak* had traveled four hundred miles and they were flying comparatively low when Ted detected a steamer that bore all the marks of a warship.

As it passed nearly beneath him Ted could see the officers and crew crowding to the side nearest him, watching with breathless interest the voyager of the skies.

Then there was a puff of smoke and the faint sound of a report came to Ted's ears.

A moment later the *Silver Streak* trembled violently as though from a mortal wound!

## CHAPTER XVI

### The Edge of Peril

A stab of dread went through Ted Scott's heart as he realized what had happened.

The ship had fired a salute to the inmates of the plane, and what was meant as a graceful gesture threatened to develop into a dire calamity.

What was supposed to have been a blank cartridge must have been a solid shot, for that the plane had been struck by something he knew to a certainty.

The machine dived and wabbled and threatened to go into a tail spin. By quick work and sheer nerve Ted succeeded in regaining control of the plane, although its course was still somewhat erratic. Then his keen eyes searched the *Silver Streak* from end to end to find the source of the trouble.

The fuselage was intact. The machinery had not been injured, for there was no break in the steady hum of the motor. The left wing showed no sign of damage.

But when his eyes rested on the right wing he saw that a gaping hole had been made in it. The shot had struck it full and gone through it cleanly!

Keeping one hand on the control, Ted hastily scribbled a message to his companion and passed it through the tube. The message read:

"Stand by to take controls. Break in the wing. I'm going to climb out and try to repair it. Bear down a little to the left, so as to keep the right wing up."

Having dispatched the message, Ted got out the rubber raft so as to have it ready in case the plane had to descend to the water. Then he strapped his tools about his waist, surrendered his seat to Hapworth who came in from behind, and then climbed out upon the wing.

It was a perilous venture, for the wind had grown stronger and threatened at every moment to blow Ted from his precarious perch. He had to crawl out on his stomach, so as to offer as little resistance to the wind as possible, and even then had all he could do to retain his grip. He dug his nails into the fabric until they were torn and bleeding with the strain of holding on.

The young aviator would have felt far safer if Tom Ralston or Bill Twombley had been at the controls. Mr. Hapworth, although a good amateur flier, was by no means a professional,

and he had been suddenly thrust into a position that might have tested the nerve and skill of a veteran aviator. But Walter Hapworth showed that he had good stuff in him and held the plane comparatively steady, keeping the wing in an almost horizontal position.

Finally, after what seemed ages, Ted reached the broken section and set to work to repair it.

He was as good a mechanic as he was a flier, which was saying much. On the flying field he would have made good the damage in a hurry. But here on this swaying platform, with the wind howling about his ears, he was working at a hideous disadvantage. He needed both hands to ply his tools, yet whenever he did this he had to relinquish his grip on the plane and depend simply on the weight of his body to keep him from being blown off into the abyss of waters beneath.

Once a sudden gust caused the plane to tip and one of Ted's legs slid over the edge. At that moment he almost gave himself up for lost. But Hapworth pulled up the wing promptly, and by herculean efforts Ted was able to maintain his grip and again get his whole body on the plane. It was hair-raising, soul-racking work, and Ted felt as though he were in a nightmare.

But he toiled away doggedly, desperately, for two lives depended on the success of his efforts.

At last the hole was mended, but at such a cost to nerve and muscle that Ted's brain was in a whirl, his senses reeling. Then with infinite precautions he crawled back and dropped into the fuselage.

Hapworth gripped his hand and Ted returned the clasp. There was no need of speech as they looked into each other's eyes. Each had done a man's work in that desperate crisis. They had been face to face with death and conquered.

For an hour afterward Ted suffered from apprehension lest his work had not been sufficiently well done. But the repairs held, and the *Silver Streak* was whizzing along as though nothing had occurred to cause her alarm.

Then Ted took a moment to scribble a note to Hapworth, who had charge of the provisions. It read:

"When do we eat?"

The answer came a few minutes later when Hapworth handed over a couple of sandwiches, a cake of chocolate, and some of the coffee that had been kept hot in a thermos bottle.

Ted ate and drank with avidity and felt refreshed—mentally refreshed as well when he noted from the instrument board that they had covered over six hundred miles. Something over a quarter of the course had been followed.

Both airmen had kept a sharp lookout, but had been unable to see any trace of their rivals.

How things had fared with them they had no means of knowing. But they did know that they themselves had lost some precious time, for while the repairs had been going on Hapworth had driven at less than half speed so as to moderate the power of the wind that sought to sweep Ted from his perch.

So Ted "gave her the gun," and in response the gallant plane darted on like a meteor.

By this time dusk was coming on. Soon it deepened into dark. The stars appeared in the ineffable glory of the Pacific skies. They were reflected in the water beneath so that the *Silver Streak* seemed to be sailing through a starry firmament. Up and down, right and left, in front and behind, to the very edge of the horizon were sparkling jewels imbedded in black velvet. It was a gorgeous scene, beautiful beyond description.

Ted gave himself up to the glory of the spectacle for a time, but gradually lapsed into musings of a more personal nature.

He wondered if Harrow were dead. Ted had kept his promise and had sent to Mrs. Harrow a sum generously ample to cover all contingencies. There had been no time as yet to receive a reply. Doubtless a letter would be waiting for him when he returned to San Francisco.

And Flint! Had that rascal yet reached Honolulu? Even if he had, had he decided to

stay there? Or had he decided to go on to far-off Australia? If so, that simply meant another long journey for Ted. For, come what would, he had grimly determined to keep on the trail of the scoundrel until he had finally brought him to book.

Instinctively his eyes sought the waters below for possible steamer lights that might betray the vessel on which the man he sought might be voyaging.

Whether he ever caught him or not, there was some satisfaction to Ted in the knowledge that the man had not gone entirely unpunished. For years he had been haunted. And what was there in life for a man who believed his footsteps dogged by the shadowy figures of those whose deaths he had caused?

Ted was aroused from his musings by the fact that the wind, which had helped to drive him on, was failing. In the hope of finding more at a lower altitude, he turned the nose of the plane downward.

The lower he got the stronger he found the wind to be, and he descended until he was flying not more than fifty feet above the surface of the waves.

Now to the glory of the stars reflected in the water was added the splendor of phosphorescence. The sea seemed ablaze with gleaming lines of light that marked the track of fish gliding through the water. Some of these were

much broader and longer than others, and Ted reflected with a shudder that they were probably made by sharks or swordfish or similar pirates of the deep. It was not a wholly pleasant thought to feel perhaps that he was only within a few feet of their ravenous jaws, and instinctively he sought more altitude.

Then the craving for wind sent him down again. The more the wind helped him the less gas he would have to use. He was carrying enough for thirty hours, and hoped to complete his task within twenty-four. But at the best it was a very narrow margin, and he must husband every drop of the precious fluid he possibly could.

A message came through the tube from Hapworth. Ted opened the folded scrap of paper and read:

"Let me have your flashlight."

Ted held on to the control with his left hand while he bent down to get the flashlight from its rubber sheath.

He was in an awkward position to hand anything to one back of him, and in doing so Ted unconsciously thrust his body forward as he twisted his arm about and quite as unconsciously pushed ahead the stick.

The nose dropped. There was a terrific bump and the voyagers were drenched with spray.

A wave had struck the *Silver Streak!*

## CHAPTER XVII

### A Narrow Escape

Like a flash Ted Scott pulled back hard the stick of the plane and gave her the gun.

But in the meantime another wave had crashed against the plane and thrown her out of her stride.

She wobbled about a moment while the hearts of the voyagers were in their mouths. Then, just as another wave reared up, green and threatening, she darted upward and fought clear.

It had been a terribly close call, and again Ted's thoughts went to those phosphorescent streaks that signaled the presence of the frightful jaws just below the surface.

But the warning had been fruitful, and he sacrificed his desire for wind to the safety of a higher altitude. Never again, if he knew it, would he be so close to the water as to undergo another moment of such horror.

He soon found that he could have wind enough at any altitude. Too much, in fact, for

a gale was rising and ominous roars began to sweep about the plane.

The stars disappeared. In their place were piled up heaps of clouds that every moment became blacker and more menacing. Everything boded a night of storm.

What a storm over the ocean might well prove to be, Ted Scott knew only too well from his experience on the Atlantic flight! And from all he had heard, the Pacific, when it showed its teeth, was quite as much to be dreaded.

The weather reports before the start had indicated a clear lane for the fliers unvexed by storms. Now it appeared that the prophecy was to be overturned.

He pulled back the stick and mounted higher and higher, seeking a less turbulent stratum of air than that in which the plane had been flying.

But altitude seemed to make no difference. The storm god had sent forth his imps and they were everywhere, tearing at the plane with eager fingers as though they would rip to tatters this intruder in their realm.

Now those forces were massing as though to overwhelm the hardy airmen in one fell swoop.

The sky had become as black as ink. The only light visible anywhere was the faint gleam that fell upon the instruments on the dial board of the cockpit.

Then came a fierce, jagged streak of lightning that seemed to split the sky in half. Then followed the bellow of thunder that almost burst the eardrums of the voyagers.

As though this had been the awaited signal, a tremendous rush of wind engulfed the plane, and in a moment it was tossing about like a chip on the current of Niagara.

Had the wind set in one direction, Ted's task would have been the easier. He could have bucked it in one direction or run before it in the other. But it seemed to come from all quarters at once, east, west, north and south. It pressed down from above. It shot up from beneath with such unbridled fury that it overturned the plane, and for a few breathless moments the *Silver Streak* was hurled along upside down.

The young aviator and his navigator found themselves speeding along heads downward, and only the stoutness of the straps that held them prevented them from being sent spinning into the sea below.

But Ted Scott kept his head and brought the *Silver Streak* into its normal position. It took time to do it, however, and the upside down position had brought such a rush of blood to the head that he felt as though he were going to faint.

His ears were humming, his eyes glazing, his brain reeling.

If he lost consciousness, he was indeed undone. The plane, left without direction, would plunge into the sea.

By a tremendous effort of the will he took a grip on his whirling senses. Gradually he gained control of himself and his head cleared.

With every moment the storm increased in fury. Who was this audacious pilot that presumed to make head against it? He needed his lesson. What the wind had not yet succeeded in doing the lightning might.

There came a flash followed by a shock that made the plane tremble from end to end.

Ted thought that the motor had been struck and for a moment his heart almost stopped beating.

Had the engine been cracked? Had the plane been set on fire?

Rings of fire were playing all about him. His eyes were dazzled. His flesh was tingling, and tiny shocks of electricity seemed to be running along every nerve of his body.

He ran his eyes along the fabric of the plane. The fuselage was intact, but at the edge of one of the wings he could see a little scarlet thread.

Fire!

The tiny thread grew broader as he watched.

The lightning had left its mark.

Ted had never been nearer despair than at that moment. There was no way of reaching that wing tip. He would have been blown

away like a feather the instant he ventured outside the cockpit.

He looked at his altimeter. It showed that he was about a thousand feet above the level of the sea. Instantly he shoved the stick forward, and the nose of the plane turned downward.

Down he shot like the stick of a rocket!

He knew that he might be going to death. But certain death awaited him if he stayed in the air with that scarlet streak eating into the fabric of the wing.

It was the counsel of desperation, but it might win. He hoped to get in reaching distance of the waves. Just near enough for a billow to reach up and wash the tip of that wing, wash out the scarlet thread.

If it did—and it was but a chance—if it did, he might be able to give his craft the gun and dart upward again with the fire subdued.

But could he time things so exactly? It would have been a remarkable feat, even in clear weather. In that raging storm and darkness the chances were a thousand to one against him.

But he must take that one chance.

Down shot the plane toward the sea!

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Just in Time

A flash of lightning revealed to the endangered airmen the ocean beneath, its waves running mountain high, the great green combers breaking with a thunderous roar into spray.

Ted Scott glanced at the scarlet thread.

It was bigger now and brighter. The winds had fanned it, and it had gained a grip on the fabric. A few minutes more and the wing would be a mass of flame.

A wave dashing over it would put it out. But would it not also pull the plane down into the raging waters?

The fire demon above! The water demon below! Both of them ruthless! Both reaching for their lives!

Just at the moment of Ted's indecision the heavens opened and the rain came down in torrents!

It was like a reprieve to men condemned to death and already on the scaffold.

Ted's heart gave a bound. They were saved!

For that deluge of rain had instantly extinguished the creeping fire. The scarlet thread had disappeared.

Like a flash Ted pulled the stick toward him and the *Silver Streak* darted upward into the empyrean.

There it had still the gale to battle with. But at least that creeping red terror had been conquered.

Ted's heart was beating like a triphammer, and he was drenched in sweat from the terrible strain that he had been under. He knew that his companion must be feeling the same way.

True blue, Walter Hapworth was. Had he been panicky, had he risen from his seat, had he touched or diverted Ted from his task in those critical moments, the result might have been disastrous. But he had sat as rigid as a statue, facing death with the stoicism of a hero.

But Ted Scott had little time to think of anything other than the task that confronted him. The storm still raged in all its fury, and the torrents of rain that beat against the plane tended still further to upset its equilibrium and render it more difficult of guidance.

It was an immense comfort, however, to note that the motor had not been damaged from the lightning stroke. The flash must have struck it a glancing blow and passed out to sea, leaving behind it that ominous scarlet thread as a memento of its passage.

A furious gust blew in the window at one side of the cockpit. The rain came in in bucketfuls, drenching Ted to the skin and flooding the fuselage with water. It blinded his eyes so that he could not read his instruments, and it destroyed still further the balance and buoyancy of the plane.

Ted could not leave the controls, but Hapworth was equal to the emergency. In a moment he was at work nailing his slicker over the window securely enough to keep out the rain and the wind. Then he turned his attention to the water that had been shipped and had soon thrown it overboard.

Until midnight the storm continued, the wind roaring furiously, the rain coming down in torrents, the lightning playing incessantly, and the thunder rumbling its deep-throated menace.

Then it gradually began to abate. The rain ceased to fall. The lightning no longer made the air one sheet of flame. The thunder subsided into a distant murmur and finally died away altogether. The clouds shredded away and the stars peeped out, singly at first and then in groups, until the whole firmament was ablaze with their liquid beauty.

The storm had done its worst. But it had not conquered the daring voyagers who had defied its fury.

It was with infinite relief that Ted Scott per-

mitted himself to relax in his seat. He was sore and aching in every muscle. But at the same time his heart was jubilant.

He wondered how his rivals had survived that battle with the elements. As successfully, he hoped, as he had himself. He would far rather have lost the race than owe it to a disaster to any one of his competitors.

Now, with the air more tranquil, he began to wonder how the storm had affected his progress. He could see from the compass that he had been driven far out of his projected course. At times the wind no doubt had speeded him forward. But at other times he had been bucking dead against it and had either remained almost stationary or had been driven backward.

He had a certain uneasiness about his instruments. How far had they been affected, if at all, by the sea of electricity through which the plane had been sailing? He knew how lightning could affect all reckonings.

At any rate, it was essential that they should take their reckoning by the stars to locate their exact position. How he rejoiced that this was now possible!

He scribbled a note and sent it through the tube.

"Shoot the stars," the message read. "I'm a little leary about our exact location."

The answer came back promptly.

"All right," it read. "Give her the gun so as to get as high as possible."

Ted pulled back the stick and the *Silver Streak* shot upward toward the stars.

When it had reached a height of fifteen thousand feet and not a particle of cloud intervened between the plane and the glorious spectacle above, Ted steadied the plane and Hapworth got out his instruments and took the necessary observations.

When at last these were concluded, Hapworth sent a scrap of paper through the tube to the pilot.

"About sixty miles out of our course, and an hour and a half behind our schedule," the message read. Then followed latitude and longitude.

Ted sent back an answer.

"Not so good," he wrote. "But now it's up to us to make up for lost time. Watch our smoke!"

He compared his instrument with the figures that Hapworth had given, found some discrepancies that he adjusted, and then let out the *Silver Streak* for all that she was worth.

The gallant plane responded nobly to the added urge, and Ted noted with exultation the speed at which she was whizzing.

Ninety miles! Ninety-five! A hundred! A hundred and five! A hundred and ten! A hundred and fifteen! A hundred and twenty!

She was fairly eating up the miles, going like a meteor, Ted mused.

Now, the wind, that a little before had been such a deadly enemy, Ted wooed as though it had been a sweetheart. He sought it eagerly, jockeying the plane in search of every breath of it, now ascending then descending, in hope of finding a stronger current to add still more to the speed of the plane.

He found it at a height of about two thousand feet and kept it. The *Silver Streak* was fairly splitting the atmosphere as it rushed on like a thing alive.

Then Ted looked below him and saw something that stabbed him to the heart.

A ship was in flames!

## CHAPTER XIX

### The Burning Ship

Instantly Ted Scott turned the nose of the plane downward.

As he drew nearer, the young aviator could see that a large sailing ship was ablaze from stem to stern. Every mast stood out in red relief against the waste of waters.

The spectacle sent a thrill of horror through the veins of the occupants of the plane, themselves threatened so recently by a similar danger.

Ted's first impulse was that of help, of rescue. But another glance told him that there could be no one living in that holocaust of flame. The crew had either already perished or had taken to the boats and were now battling for their lives in those terrible waters, still running mountain high from the influence of the storm.

His eyes searched the wastes for the boats. There was nothing visible within the zone of light cast by the flames. Nor, in the surround-

ing darkness, could he descry any dots on the waters.

He descended still lower and cruised about in ever widening circles. But, scan the surface as keenly as he could, nothing appeared to reward his search. When he pulled out his night glasses and swept the sea with them he was equally baffled.

Ted's heart swelled with pity for the helpless survivors. Had the sea swallowed them up, added a few more to the millions whose bones already lined the ocean's floor?

A mast swayed and fell over hissing into the sea, which sent up great clouds of steam. Another followed a moment later. It was evidently only a matter of a short time before the dismantled hulk would itself give a final lurch and disappear beneath the waves.

Ted drew his Very pistol and discharged several flares in different directions. But they served only to make the darkness visible and revealed no boats.

Still he hoped that the flares might have been seen. He watched for some return flare, some rocket with which perhaps the boats might be equipped.

His ideas of what he could do, even if he did discern the presence of boats, were of the haziest. At the very most, even if it were possible to get in touch with them, he could only rescue one or two of the castaways perhaps by

letting down a rope. The plane would not hold more.

Still, he might have been able to let the men know that their plight had been discovered and that help would be dispatched to them as soon as possible.

Though a lot of time was spent in cruising around, the search was fruitless, and at last Ted gave it up. His heart was very heavy as he finally turned the nose of the plane upward.

Had the ship been equipped with wireless? he wondered. Had it been able to send out SOS signals before the crew had been forced to take to the boats?

He hoped it had. But at any rate he had his own radio, and he would put it to use at once.

He sent a note to Mr. Hapworth in these words.

"Take exact observations once more. Get present longitude and latitude. Then get the radio busy. Try to get in touch with ships."

Walter Hapworth set to work at once and was soon flinging messages out into the air.

Through the night they went winging, and before long Hapworth picked up replies from three different ships, all within a hundred miles of the spot stating that they had received the messages and were making their way toward the place indicated.

With a great lightening of the heart, Ted Scott blessed the wonderful science whose wiz-

ardry was able to accomplish such miracles.

Less than an hour elapsed before the aviators saw a great liner ploughing at full speed in the direction of the wreck and they had little doubt that it was one of those that had received their signal.

What matter now to Ted Scott whether he won or lost the race? He had already done something far better, had perhaps been instrumental in saving scores of lives. His heart sang within him.

On he went and on. He had to make up the time that he had lost in cruising about.

But now the motor began to knock. It was no longer a steady hum that proceeded from it, that hum that was sweetest music to the ears of the airman. Instead, at intervals there were sharp knocks that betokened trouble.

He eased the engine down and then started it up a little, trying to detect from the sound what the matter was.

Had the lightning stroke injured it, after all, and was the result belatedly showing itself?

Or had water perhaps got mixed with the gas when the plane was being fueled?

Whatever it was, it filled Ted with dire uneasiness, for he could not repair this as he had repaired the wing. To overhaul the engine a landing would be necessary.

If his machine had been a seaplane, this would perhaps have been feasible, though at-

tended with great risk in the present agitated condition of the sea.

But the *Silver Streak* was not a seaplane. There was no island on which she could land this side of Hawaii. And if there had been and she should land, she would automatically take herself out of the race, for the stipulation was that it was to be a non-stop flight.

No wonder that Ted Scott's heart was filled with dread as he listened to that ominous knocking, for it might be death knocking with his skeleton fingers.

For perhaps ten minutes the taps continued. Then Ted noted to his delight that they were growing more widely spaced. At last they ceased altogether and the engine resumed its steady hum. The heart had fluttered for a time, but now was beating strongly once more.

Immensely relieved, the young aviator now had time to realize that he was hungry. A couple of sandwiches and a drink of coffee refreshed him, and with renewed energy he set himself to his task.

The dawn was breaking. Streaks of light, like fairy fingers, crept up the eastern sky. Gradually they took on a more gorgeous coloring as though adorning themselves with jewels fitly to meet the lord of day. Then the sun itself appeared like a great ball of gold over the distant horizon, while its rays turned the sea into molten silver.

A glance at his instruments told Ted that he had covered approximately three-quarters of the trip.

Something over five hundred miles yet to go! At the end of that five hundred miles, Hawaii, lifting itself like a row of emeralds out of the waters of the ocean!

Ted saw that paradise of the Pacific as in an iridescent dream. But from that dream he was brought rudely back to reality with a jerk.

The engine was going dead!

The *Silver Streak* was falling!

## CHAPTER XX

### Racing with Death

The letting down of the engine was so unexpected, and at the same time so unexplainable, that for a moment Ted Scott was stupefied.

Had the gasoline supply run out? He knew that he had taken plenty to last for at least thirty hours. And they had not yet traveled twenty.

Or—and for the moment this seemed the most likely supposition—had the terrific storm so strained a tank that it had sprung a leak and let the precious fluid on which their lives depended trickle out?

Luckily, he was at a considerable height, and even with the waning power of the engine could volplane down slowly, describing wide spirals that would retard their final descent.

It occurred to the young aviator that probably there was something the matter with the gas feed. He scribbled a note to Hapworth that read:

"Gas pump on the fritz. Get busy at the wabble pump. Work fast."

Hapworth jumped to his task. In the meantime Ted got out the rubber raft, strapped his tools about his waist and put what provisions they had left within instant reach.

Then he devoted himself to the dying engine, coaxing it along and jockeying his plane so as to keep it afloat as long as possible.

Was this then to be the end? Were they to be forced down into the Pacific on the very last stretch of their long and perilous journey?

Down they went, slowly, to be sure, yet down. Now they could see the hungry waters that seemed to be reaching up to them as though to welcome them to their cold embrace. Again Ted thought with a shudder of the phosphorescent streaks and the monsters lying in wait for their prey just below the surface.

But Hapworth had got the wabble pump to working, and the gasoline came up with a rush, filling the wing tanks until they overflowed.

New life thrilled through Ted's veins. They were saved! Their gasoline supply was intact. As it got to working again the hum of the motor swelled into a roar and with a jubilant pull at the controls Ted once more sent the *Silver Streak* high into the air.

A little later he sent another message to his companion that ran:

"Get our bearings from the radio beacon."

Hapworth did so and thus once more justified the foresight that had installed the radio

in the plane. Ted compared the result with his instruments and rectified his course.

Now he had every reason to believe that he was aiming straight for Honolulu and would go as directly toward it as an arrow to its mark.

A half hour passed and a message came to Ted from Hapworth. It read as follows:

"Think I see another plane behind us and some distance to the right. Get out your field glasses."

Ted got the glasses and, holding on to the control stick with one hand, directed the glasses with the other in the direction that Hapworth had indicated.

There, sure enough, many miles away, but still so near that its slender shape could be outlined by the glasses, was an airplane flying high in the same direction as themselves.

There was a possibility of course that it might be some Hawaiian plane out on a scouting expedition or aiming to be of some service to the transoceanic fliers in case they should be in distress. But he dismissed this supposition almost instantly.

Undoubtedly it was one of his rivals. He was familiar with the make of each, but the plane was too far away to show its distinctive markings. Ted hoped that it would stay still further away. He was not keen for a closer view.

"Either the *Comanche* or the *Red Eagle*, I think," he scribbled to Hapworth. "But whichever it is, we're going to lose it pronto. Train the glasses on it and let me know when we have distanced it."

He relinquished the glasses to his companion and gave the *Silver Streak* the gun. It leaped forward like a startled horse and was soon stretching itself to the limit of its speed to such good effect that before long Hapworth thrust this message through the tube:

"You've lost her. Now it's up to you to keep her lost."

Ted Scott mentally vowed that he would do so.

A few minutes later the young aviator witnessed a singular phenomenon.

Out of the sea swirled something that looked like a funnel, with the stem resting on the waters. It was a slender stem, but with every minute the upper part grew broader.

As it broadened, Ted could see that it had a whirling motion. It was as though the stem were being twirled in the hands of a giant.

It was coming from the east, and through the upper part of the funnel the sun's rays shone, creating a marvelous rainbow glittering with prismatic colors.

But Ted had no eye just then for its beauty, for at the first glance he had recognized it for what it was—a gigantic waterspout that was

coming toward them with the speed of an express train!

Ted Scott's throat constricted with dread. He knew that if the *Silver Streak* were ever caught in that revolving mass of water he and Walter Hapworth were doomed.

He pulled the stick and the plane leaped upward.

Ted's first idea was to mount above the whirling mass and thus escape its fury. But the cornucopia that it now resembled was mounting faster than he could, and he saw in a moment that he could not clear its top.

Like a flash he turned to the left to shoot athwart it. But it was coming at frightful speed, and its roar was so fierce that the motor's noise compared to it was that of a lullaby.

Ted crowded on every inch of speed of which the plane was capable. It shot like a rocket across the path of the waterspout. Would it clear the edge?

Nearer and nearer came the whirling mass and faster and faster went the plane. It was literally a race with death!

Ted Scott won, but he won by inches. He crossed the edge by such a narrow margin that the plane and its inmates were drenched with spray and the shock of the displaced air was so great that the plane reared and tossed like a small boat on an angry sea.

Ted had all he could do to get the *Silver Streak* on an even keel again, but he succeeded at last and watched with infinite relief the waterspout disappearing in the distance.

Even in the turmoil of his thoughts he breathed a prayer that the rival plane that he had so lately seen on the horizon might, like themselves, have escaped the monster's wrath.

He set the plane on its course again, still maintaining it at full speed, for he was nearing his goal now, and it would be a bitter thing to have victory snatched from him at the last moment.

A few minutes later a message came to him through the tube:

"See anything below? Looks to me like a man on a raft, but cannot make it out clearly."

Ted looked, and what he saw confirmed Hapworth's impression.

Something down there was on a bit of planking that looked like a dot on the waters, and that something was moving.

Ted pushed on the stick and the *Silver Streak* darted downward until it was not more than a hundred feet above the sea.

Then they knew!

## CHAPTER XXI

### The Castaway

On what seemed to be a fragment of a deck-house, a man was kneeling with his hands uplifted and waving frantically at the aviators aboard the *Silver Streak*.

All about him the water was alive with sharks, swimming hungrily about, their wicked eyes fixed upon the man clinging to that frail support. Now and again one of them would dash against the extemporized raft and seek to overturn it.

The upper part of the fragment was several feet above the surface of the sea, so that the man had managed so far to keep his legs out of reach of those awful jaws. But it was evidently only a matter of time before he would become the prey of the pirates of the sea.

It was a horrible predicament, and Ted's heart was stirred with pity. He must rescue the man if possible. But how?

The airplane was not like a balloon that could hover above the raft and descend slowly. It

had to be kept in motion or it would itself fall into the sea.

There was a coil of rope among the stores of the plane. Ted motioned to Hapworth to get it out and make a wide noose at one end. The other end was fastened securely to one of the bolts of the plane.

Ted had slowed down the plane so that the motor's roar was subdued and he could be heard by his companion.

"Lean over the side, show the man the noose and motion to him that he must catch it and slip it over his shoulders and under his arms," Ted shouted. "I'll keep the plane going as slowly as I can. But he'll have to act quickly in getting it over his head. He's probably too weak to hold on by his hands."

Hapworth did as he was told and directed the man in dumb show, putting the noose several times under his own arms. The man nodded eagerly as a sign that he understood.

The most skillful jockeying of the plane was required to carry out the maneuver. There was danger that the rope might catch an edge of the planking and overturn it. Or, even if the man caught it, he might not be able to adjust it before the motion of the plane pulled him from his support. In either case the sharks would have their belated feast.

Moving in ever narrowing circles and at the same time steadily going lower, Ted at last

gave the signal to Hapworth to throw the rope.

He did so, and the man made a grab at it but just missed it, the action almost overbalancing him.

He recovered himself, and again the trial was made.

This time the man caught it and tried to adjust it over his shoulders. But in his weakness and agitation he fumbled, getting it over his head and one arm, but not beneath both arms.

Instantly Ted pulled back the stick a trifle and swung the man off the raft high enough to escape the hungry jaws. One shark half leaped out of the water, but missed the swinging body.

In a flash Ted had fixed the plane so that it would go by itself for a few minutes and had rushed to Hapworth's side. By their united efforts they pulled up the man and hoisted him into the after part of the cockpit.

Then Ted resumed his seat at the controls, leaving Hapworth to unfasten the ropes and administer aid to the fellow creature whom they had rescued from so terrible a death.

They had lost perhaps half an hour in the effort. With that other plane so close in pursuit, it might well have lost them the race. But Ted Scott did not regret it for a second. He would have lost a thousand races to save a life.

He let out every ounce of speed the plane

possessed in the endeavor to make up for the lost time. There was a light following wind that helped, and mile after mile fell swiftly away behind him.

Except for the time that he had been engrossed in his rescue efforts, Ted had kept a constant lookout for the other plane, but had seen no traces of it.

This was comforting as far as it went, but not conclusive. His rival might have veered somewhat from the course he had been following when he had been first discerned. At this very moment he might be in the van.

But Ted did not borrow trouble. He believed that he had the faster plane, and felt that that might be sufficient to make up for the time spent in the rescue.

With everything going nicely, he took a moment to dash off a note to Hapworth:

"How's the man getting on?" the message read.

The answer that came back a moment later was longer than usual, and its tenor made Ted prick up his ears:

"Man doing well," said the note. "Exhaustion and exposure but no broken bones or other serious injuries. Has a queer story. Says he was thrown overboard from the *Waikiki*. Name is Jim Mack."

The *Waikiki!* The boat on which Si Flint had shipped for Hawaii!

Ted scribbled a few words.

"Change places with me," he wrote. "Plane going finely and all you'll have to do is to keep her on her course. I want to speak to Mack."

A moment later Ted was looking at the resened hands, evidently a manual laborer. His fortably in a sitting position with his back against the wall of the fuselage.

He was a man of middle age with toil-hardened hands, evidently a manual laborer. His sodden garments were of rough material. His face was haggard from strain, but the eyes were honest and his general aspect reliable and self-respecting.

Conversation was difficult, owing to the roar of the motor, but by getting close to him and shouting Ted could make himself heard, while he captured the man's weaker answers by putting his ear close to the castaway's lips.

Mack tried to express his thanks, but Ted waved them aside.

"That's all right," he said. "You'd have done as much for me in the same pinch. My navigator says that you were thrown over board from the *Waikiki.*"

The man nodded.

"How did that happen?" asked Ted. "Who did it?"

"A fellow named Flint did it," was the reply, and the man clenched his fists as he spoke.

Ted's heart gave a bound.

"Flint!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Si Flint?"

"That's the man," replied Mack, surprised at Ted's agitation. "Why? Do you know him?"

"I've heard of him," answered Ted. "But go ahead. Tell me all about it."

"It was this way," began Mack. "I'd never seen Flint till I met him on the boat. We bunked in the same cabin, and naturally we got to know each other pretty well. He was a good talker and had seen a lot of the world, and we got along all right. But there was one thing about him that I sure didn't like."

"What was that?" asked Ted, as Mack paused for a moment.

"A way he had of talking and groaning in his sleep," replied Mack. "He had awful nightmares. Keep me awake sometimes half the night. Then, too, he always wanted to have a light burning, while I liked to sleep in the dark. 'Fraid of the dark, he was anyways. Always looking behind him and peeking into dark corners, as if he saw something that no one else saw."

"I think I understand," said Ted grimly. "But go on."

"Of course it was kind o' skeery, and I didn't like it any too well," went on Mack. "But I kept thinking to myself that we'd soon be to

Hawaii, and so I didn't say nothing until yesterday. The night before that he'd been muttering something awful in his sleep about a murder. Something about shooting and a bank and an alley and a prison and all sorts of gibberish. So yesterday morning I says to him, I says, just joshing like:

"'You'll have the cops after you, Si,' I says, 'if you don't stop talking in your sleep.'

"Just kidding like, you know. But he got as white as a sheet.

"'What was I talking about?' he asked me.

"'Oh, murder and shooting and banks and such stuff,' I says, grinning at him.

"You see, I didn't mean any harm. But he walked away without another word and he kept away from me all day. I was going to try to make it up with him, but he wouldn't give me a chance. And that night when I was standing in a dark place up near the bow he came up soft like behind me, and before I knew it he grabbed me by the legs and heaved me overboard. I know it was him, because I had a look at his face as I went over."

"The scoundrel!" muttered Ted between his teeth.

"I hollered when I came up," continued Mack, "but nobody could have heard me, for the steamer went right on. I thought I was sure a goner. I swam as long as I could, but I was just going under when I struck that bit

of wreckage. I climbed up on it and you know the rest."

"When does the *Waikiki* reach Honolulu?" asked Ted after a moment.

"To-day," was the answer.

To-day! The *Waikiki* and the *Silver Streak!* Si Flint and Ted Scott!

## CHAPTER XXII

### Land Ho!

"What kind of looking man is this Flint, Mack?" asked Ted Scott after a moment.

"Rather tall and lanky like," answered Jim Mack. "Eyes set pretty close together. Has a scar on his left cheek where he said a feller knifed him once. There's a bit of a cast in his right eye. And, oh yes, there's another thing. He's lost the joint of his little finger. Got it mashed in a door, he said."

Ted stored these facts away in his memory.

"Did Flint say that he was going to settle down in Hawaii?" he asked.

"He wasn't sure," was the response. "Said he thought he'd look around a bit, anyway. Then, if things didn't suit him, he might go by the next boat to Australia. Didn't seem to be in no particular hurry."

The next boat! That would probably be a matter of a week or ten days at the earliest. Ted Scott vowed to himself that long before that next boat left Honolulu he would have laid his hands on the rascal.

"You seem to be real het up on account of that feller," remarked Mack, studying Ted's face curiously.

"I may well be," returned Ted grimly. "He did one of my family a great wrong, and I've been on his track for some time. When I find him there'll be a reckoning!"

"That goes for me too," exclaimed Mack. "The murdering scoundrel! To creep up behind me in the dark and heave me overboard! Me, who had never done him any harm!"

"It's because he was afraid that you would do him harm," replied Ted. "He knew that you had his secret. As a matter of fact, he hadn't said anything definite, and you couldn't have hung anything on him. But he probably thought he had said a good deal more than he had, and he made up his mind to get you out of the way. Dead men tell no tales, you know."

"Murdering seems to come easy to him," muttered Mack. "I guess I wasn't the first he'd tried it on."

"I know you weren't," replied Ted.

"Do you really know of any one he killed?" asked Mack, with quickened interest.

"Yes," replied Ted. "But that's neither here nor there. I'll tell you all about it, perhaps, after I've nabbed him. And you can help me, if you will. Have you got any job that you're going to work at as soon as you get to Honolulu?"

"No," replied Mack. "I was going to look around for one. But don't let that trouble you. I've got a bit to get along on in a belt strapped about my waist, and my time's yours as long as you want it. I owe it to you after saving my life."

"That's all right," returned Ted. "I'll see that you don't lose anything. I want you to stick close by me after we get there, and we'll hunt this fellow down together."

"Count me in," replied Mack. "And we can get the police to working on it, too."

"No, this isn't a matter for the police," declared Ted. "Not, at any rate, until after we've got Flint, if we do get him. Keep this whole matter to yourself until I give the word. Of course Mr. Hapworth is in on it, and you can talk to him as freely as to me. But to no one else."

"I'm hep," agreed Mack. "And there ain't anything you ask that I won't do."

Ted left the man and exchanged places with Mr. Hapworth. His mind was in a tumult from what he had learned. So much so that for the next few minutes he thought more of Si Flint than he did of the race.

He was closing in upon the rascal, and if luck were with him, he might be landing at the flying field almost as soon as the *Waikiki* would be docking at Honolulu.

He did not underestimate the danger of the

task he had assigned himself. That Flint was a desperate man was evidenced by the cold-blooded way in which he had tried to silence Jim Mack. One murder more or less would be nothing to him, on the theory that he might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb.

A message was thrust to him through the tube.

"Just picked up a radio from the vessel *Storm King,*" the message read. "Says that it picked up the small boats from the burning vessel not far from the place we indicated. Some seventy in all in the boats, but all were rescued."

Joyfully Ted wrote back:

"Bully! Worth taking the time for, even if we lose the race isn't it, old scout?"

Seventy lives snatched from the maw of the hungry sea! He thought of the rapture that must have thrilled the hearts of the derelicts as the steamer nosed its way in among them. He thought, too, of the wives who had not been left widows, the children who had not become orphans.

But these happy thoughts he soon dismissed and buckled down to the task of winning the race.

The *Silver Streak* was whizzing along in a way to justify her name. The weather was ideal. It was as though nature had repented of the storm of the night before and was doing

all in her power to make amends. And where they were now they could fairly count on the continuance of good weather. The young aviator drew comfort from the thought that fog, hail or snow had never been recorded in the weather bureau of the Hawaiian Islands.

Ted estimated his location by his instruments and had them confirmed by Hapworth's independent observations. The latter shot the sun and found that they were within two hundred miles of Honolulu.

Ted glanced at his clock. If his luck held, he would reach his destination in a trifle less than the twenty-four hours he had given himself, and that despite the storm, the burning vessel, the injured wing, and the rescue of the castaway! Some record, he told himself with justifiable pride. If it had not been for these delays, he would already be hovering over the flying field.

One twinge of apprehension came to him when Hapworth reported:

"Something that looks like a plane over to the right. Can you see it?"

Ted snatched his glasses and looked in the indicated direction. His relief was great when he saw that what had looked like a plane had been only a cloud of a peculiar shape. Even as he looked, it shredded away into nothingness.

Still, there might be a plane, or perhaps two

of them, so far ahead of him that they could not be seen.

On he went and on. No sparing the gas now! On and ever on, devouring mile after mile.

He was soon within a hundred and fifty miles of his destination. Then the distance dwindled to a hundred and twenty-five. A little later to a hundred. The *Silver Streak* was flying as never before.

Seventy-five! Fifty!

Ted's blood was fairly boiling with excitement. He straightened up in his seat and stared fixedly ahead of him.

Then on the horizon appeared a bluish tinge that gradually assumed a deeper hue. Ted knew what it was. Land!

"First stop Honolulu!" he shouted in a voice that reached Hapworth over the roar of the motor.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### Winning the Prize

At Wheeler Field, where the fliers were to alight, twenty-five miles from the city of Honolulu, a crowd of thirty thousand people were waiting, seething with excitement.

A stream of humanity had found its way to the landing field. Many of them had been up all night, waiting for the bulletins that announced the progress of the fliers. The theaters had read the news from the stage. In the early morning, while the moon was still shining, enthusiasts had crowded all roads leading to the field. Giant searchlights blended with the moon's rays and the effect was one of overwhelming beauty.

All sorts of rumors were flying about, some of them fanciful and others with more or less confirmation. One plane was reported to have crashed at Koko Head, but investigation proved this to be unfounded. Two were said to have come down in the Pacific, and ships were reported as being in search of them.

Passing steamships had sighted the *Silver Streak,* the *Comanche* and the *Red Eagle* at various stages of the course, and, as far as known, they were still in the air.

The United States Navy was taking a hand in safeguarding the aviators against disaster, and some thirty destroyers with other craft were patroling the island waters. Merchant vessels also established lookouts. Above the field hovered a number of airplanes, ready to go out and act as an escort to the airmen as soon as they should be descried on the horizon.

It was a good-natured crowd, with all the races represented that gather at that meeting place of the East and West. Caucasians predominated, but color was lent by Japanese girls in their sashed kimonos, Chinese in their pajama trousers, Filipinos, Koreans, native Hawaiians, and a host of others, brown, yellow and white. And all were agog with the mysterious stir that runs through crowds everywhere when waiting for history to be made.

Army men served as guards to keep the throngs at a safe distance from the place assigned for the planes to land. It was anticipated that a great rush would be made to greet the visitors from the skies, and all precautions had been taken to minimize the danger of accidents.

The sun was reaching its zenith when a volley of bombs roared from army guns. It

was the signal that one at least of the oncoming planes had been seen.

Instantly the flock of planes set off to act as an escort and all eyes were turned upon them as they turned the noses of their machines toward the city of Honolulu.

As the crowd watched breathlessly a minute dot appeared far up in the sky. It was coming like the wind, and with every moment grew more distinct. The escorting planes flew to meet it and formed around it in a wide circle.

On they came like a flock of white-winged birds. As they reached the vicinity of the flying field the escort fell back, leaving that one solitary plane alone.

Then, while the crowd broke into a thunderous roar, the *Silver Streak* swung down through the blaze of a cloudless noon to a perfect landing, taxied for a few hundred feet and stopped.

Ted Scott thrust his head out of the cockpit with the inimitable smile that had endeared him to the whole world.

"Hello, folks!" he exclaimed. He got no further.

There was a wild rush for the plane, and the plucky young aviator was fairly mobbed. Every one wanted to be the first to shake the hand or touch the garments of the dauntless navigator of the skies.

It was all that the soldiers could do to clear

a space, and even then they had to fix bayonets to keep the crowd at a safe distance.

Then the Governor of the Islands, army and navy officials, and local dignitaries comprising the welcoming committee, came hurrying forward to greet Ted Scott and Mr. Hapworth, who had by this time released their straps and climbed from the machine. Both the fliers were overwhelmed by the warmth and enthusiasm of their reception.

"Are we the first ones here?" asked Ted, as soon as he could get his breath.

"You are," replied the Governor. "You've won the prize. And not only that, but your flying time is less than the twenty-four hours which was looked upon as the shortest time possible. You've hung up a record that will probably never be beaten."

The two aviators looked at each other with jubilation in their eyes.

They had won the race!

And they had won it against a series of delays and hindrances that might well have discouraged hearts less stout and courageous than theirs.

Garlands of leis, the typical decorations of Hawaii, were brought forward and hung about their necks, while the members of the committee vied with each other in expressing their admiration of the exploit.

For half an hour or more there was a cease-

less series of questions and answers and felicitations on the victory they had won.

The presence of Jim Mack gave rise to surprise and conjecture, and when they learned of the daring rescue in mid-Pacific the enthusiasm of the spectators rose to fever heat.

"A mighty gallant thing to do!" exclaimed the Governor. "It doubles the brilliancy of the victory, for you might very well have lost the race because of the delay it occasioned. Yet despite that handicap, you pulled through. How did it happen that the man found himself in such a plight?"

"Dropped into the water from the rail of a steamer at night," replied Ted evasively, not caring to go into details for the moment. He did not want Flint to be put on his guard and go into hiding. "By the way," he continued, "has the *Waikiki* come in yet?"

"Not that I know of," was the reply. "But she was due to dock about noon. We'll find out when we get over to Honolulu. But come over now to field headquarters and have some refreshments. You must need them."

"I guess we do," laughed Ted, with a glance at Hapworth, who nodded assent. "We haven't been what you'd call feasting on the trip."

They found an elaborate luncheon prepared, to which they did full justice. There were a few brief and impromptu speeches, but the

more formal ones were reserved for the evening when there was to be a grand banquet in honor of the fliers.

The luncheon had barely concluded when there was a hubbub on the field, and all hurried out to learn the cause of the excitement.

A glance at the sky told them, for, poised high in the air, the *Comanche* was swooping down, looking for a landing.

It made one perfectly, and instantly the plane was surrounded by that portion of the crowd that still remained upon the field.

Coit and Broasen, cramped and stiff, descended from the cockpit and received a reception second only to that which had been accorded Ted and Hapworth.

The aviators were smiling, but their faces lengthened somewhat, despite themselves, when they caught sight of the *Silver Streak* and a moment later saw Ted Scott in the van of the throng.

Despite the disappointment as they realized that they had lost the first prize, they were game sports, and there was no bitterness in their faces as they grasped Ted's extended hands.

"Beat us, I see," observed Coit.

"Not by much," responded Ted. "And you fellows nearly gave me heart failure when I caught a glimpse of you against the sky a little while ago."

"We saw you too, and we put in our best licks to get ahead of you," put in Broasen. "But our best wasn't good enough. Well, it's all in the game. Ten thousand dollars isn't to be sneezed at. And I'd rather have had you beat us than anybody else."

"Yes," laughed Coit, "it's an honor even to come in second to Ted Scott. But how about the other fellows? Hope nothing's happened to them."

"I guess the *Red Eagle* is all right," replied Ted. "She was about two hundred miles out an hour ago, according to radio report. Ought to be in soon. News isn't so good though about the *Arrow* and the *Falcon*. They had mishaps at the start but patched things up and came on afterward. Plucky boys! Report is that they came down somewhere in the ocean, but there are a lot of ships looking for them and I hope they'll be picked up."

"I hope so," said Coit feelingly. "From what I've seen of that ocean—and I've seen plenty—there are lots of places I'd rather be than there."

A little later the aviators entered motor cars, which swiftly sped over the miles intervening between the flying field and the city of Honolulu.

The road led through scenes of enchanting beauty that at other times would have stirred Ted Scott to the depths, but just now there was

only one thing that he was bent on seeing.

"What are you thinking of, Ted?" asked Mr. Hapworth, who sat beside him.

The young aviator roused himself from his absorption.

"I'm thinking," he said, "of a man with a scar on his cheek and the joint of a finger missing."

## CHAPTER XXIV

### In Hot Pursuit

The leading hotel of Honolulu, where a handsome suite had been reserved for Ted Scott and Mr. Hapworth, was reached. There the committee left the fliers to get some much needed rest before the festivities planned for the evening.

It was with a sigh of relief that the two found themselves their own masters for a time. But before he took a bath or attended to anything else Ted set to work on the quest that absorbed all his thoughts.

He telephoned to the clerk's desk and learned that the *Waikiki* had got in two hours before. This chagrined Ted, for he had based high hopes on capturing Flint as he came off the boat. Now the passengers had long since disembarked, and the man he sought would have to be looked for in the streets or cheap lodging houses of the city.

He turned to Mack, who had been brought to the suite with them.

"Jim," he said, taking a roll of bills from his pocket, "here's something for you to get on with. I want you to go to some respectable lodging on the water front and take up quarters there. Then keep your eyes open for Flint. Hang around the streets and the sailors' resorts. He'll probably turn up there sooner or later. Honolulu isn't like New York, you know, and it ought to be easy to find him."

"Trust me," replied Jim. "I'll be on the job day and night. But if I see him, what then? Shall I nab him and holler for a cop?"

"No," replied Ted. "Not that. Follow him and find out where he's lodging. Then telephone me and I'll come running."

"Suppose he sees me first?" queried Jim.

"I've thought of that," replied Ted. "Get yourself a pair of heavy colored glasses and keep your cap pulled down over your face. I guess that will help you to get by."

Mack departed to pursue his instructions, and Ted and Hapworth, after a refreshing shower, took a nap to prepare themselves for the ordeal of the evening. For it was an ordeal, and they would have much preferred to have been allowed to sleep. But fame has its penalties, and they had to submit.

The banquet was held in the Governor's mansion, and was a brilliant and elaborate affair. Officers of the army and navy were there in their dress uniforms and almost every

one of note in the islands was present. Pretty women and girls were out in force, each one of them openly hoping that she would get a dance with the hero of the occasion. The army band, behind a bower of palms, furnished the music and the dining room was hung with bunting and decorated with the magnificent flowers of Hawaii.

Coit and Broasen were there and also Foy and Mallenger, for the *Red Eagle* had come in safely a couple of hours behind the *Comanche.*

Reassuring news had come from the wrecked flyers. The *Arrow* had been picked up with pilot and navigator unharmed, and the *Falcon* had succeeded in getting in radio touch with one of the rescuing vessels that was hurrying to its assistance.

So, with no shadow of tragedy to damp the spirits of those present, the banquet was a great success. The speeches were felicitous and to the point and were warm in their laudations of the guests of the evening.

The Governor's speech was especially noteworthy. He mentioned each of the fliers by name, and the name was the signal for vociferous applause. He dwelt on the rare courage required to participate in such a flight where each one knew that he was taking chances with death.

Hawaii, he said, had felt itself to be a distant outpost of the United States, a sort of

step-child of the great country to which it owed allegiance. These flights had taken it out of that category, had focused the public mind upon the island paradise, had brought it into the limelight. Then he visioned a time in the near future when airships would be sailing on a regular twenty-four or thirty hour schedule between San Francisco and Honolulu, thus contributing greatly to the importance and prosperity of the islands.

Ted was called on to reply in behalf of all the airmen, and he did this in a few modest and well chosen words. He thanked his hosts for their generous reception and splendid entertainment. He glossed over lightly his own exploit, which, he said, owed its success in a great degree to his navigator, Mr. Hapworth. He paid a graceful tribute to his fellow airmen, not forgetting those brave but unfortunate souls that had been wrecked in the Pacific.

There was a storm of applause when he finished. Then followed dancing, and it was only in the wee, sma' hours that the festivities came to an end.

For two days more the aviators found their hands full in keeping the engagements made by the committee for their entertainment. There were drives through the beautiful country, swimming parties on the beach, invitations to private affairs without number.

Ted was on tenterhooks and would gladly have begged off, but could not out of courtesy to his hosts. One thing, however, brought him some satisfaction. Flint was still on the island.

By discreet inquiries he had learned that the man had disembarked at Honolulu. He also learned that when the *Waikiki* sailed the next day for Australia Flint had not been among the passengers. So he was still within possible reach.

Ted felt reasonably sure that the fellow would stay in Honolulu. The man was naturally a city dweller. It would be unlikely that he would abandon the only large city for some obscure rural district.

Still, there was a chance that he might, and Ted inwardly fretted and fumed at the formalities that delayed his search.

Mack had reported every morning, but only to say that so far he had secured no results.

On the third day, however, he turned up with something definite. But there was chagrin in his eyes as he faced Ted.

"You've got news?" asked Ted eagerly.

"Of a sort, yes," replied Mack. "I've seen Flint."

"You have?" exclaimed Ted. "Where? When?"

"This morning," replied Jim. "In a street one block from the water front. But then I lost him again, worse luck!"

"Tell me about it," urged Ted.

"It was this way," said Mack. "I was going along looking here, there, and everywhere, when I caught sight of some one of his build a block or so ahead of me. I followed the fellow, keeping at about the same distance, because I didn't want him to recognize me. He turned sideways once to look at a building across the street and then I saw his face. It was Flint, right enough.

"So he kept going and I kept going, hoping he was going to the place where he lived. Then he came to a corner and turned around it, and when I got there a minute later there was neither hide nor hair of him to be seen."

"That shows that he must have slipped into one of the houses thereabouts," put in Ted.

"That's the queer thing about it," replied Mack. "There wasn't any house there. Just a big board fence on one side of the street and the beach on the other. No place where even a mouse could hide. Yet he'd gone, just like one of them ghosts he's always talking about. I hung about there for a couple of hours, and then I thought I'd come and tell you about it. I guess I'm a pretty bum detective."

"Never mind, Jim," said Ted. "It's a big thing to know that he's still in the town. We'll nab him yet. You go down now and do some more hunting. I've got an engagement now, but I'll be at liberty late this afternoon. I'll

meet you at the steamboat pier at five o'clock, and we'll look for him together."

"Count me in," remarked Mr. Hapworth.

"Sure thing," agreed Ted. "What one pair of eyes doesn't see another may. On your way now, Jim, and we'll see you later."

No further report came from Mack through the day, and at the appointed time the three met at the steamboat pier.

"Anything doing, Jim?" asked Ted.

"Not a thing, though I sure ain't been sleeping on the job," replied Mack. "Have gone through the district like a finetooth comb, but nothing to show for it. I'm dead sore at myself for letting him get away this morning."

They strolled through the streets, Ted with a rolled package under his arm. They were roughly dressed so as not to attract attention.

Up one street and down another they strolled, turning at various times into the poolrooms and other resorts that dotted the quarter, but without result until twilight was coming on.

Then, as they turned a corner, Mack clutched Ted by the arm.

"There he is!" he whispered.

## CHAPTER XXV

### Captured

Jim Mack pointed to the figure of a man half a block away.

"Are you sure?" asked Ted, his pulses leaping.

"Dead sure," replied Mack. "I'd know him among a thousand."

The approaching man looked up, and Mack, in trying to turn his face so that he should not be recognized, dropped his glasses.

Flint gave one startled look. His jaw dropped. There was the man he had thrown overboard, the man he had believed to be dead. Jim Mack in the flesh!

But his paralysis endured for only an instant. He turned and ran like a startled deer. He rounded the next corner with the three in full pursuit.

They turned that corner just in time to see Flint jump into a waiting taxicab.

"Quick!" Flint yelled to the Japanese driver. "Out into the country anywhere!

Twenty-five dollars if you make fast time! Quick, I tell you!"

The promise of the money acted like an electric shock on the driver, and he darted off like a flash just as Ted made a dive for the machine but missed.

The pursuers hunted about frantically, but it was several minutes before they themselves could secure a cab. Into it they bundled, and Ted pointed out to the driver the cab that was now a mere dot in the distance.

"See that cab?" he exclaimed. "And see these bills?" and he took a roll from his pocket. "The money's yours if you catch the cab!"

Then the chase began in dead earnest.

Everything depended on catching their quarry before night fell. Otherwise Flint might easily escape under cover of darkness.

The pursuers watched with straining eyes and could see that the cab in front was growing gradually larger to their sight. They were gaining on it.

Their driver was getting every ounce of power out of his machine, and the distance between the two vehicles lessened until they could see dimly the livid face of Flint peering out of the window at the back, the while he frantically urged his driver on.

There were many windings in the road and there were times when pursuer and pursued lost sight of each other. But each time that

they came in sight again they were closer.

For over ten miles the race continued. Then, on turning a bend of the road, Ted and his friends came so suddenly on the other cab that their driver had to put on the brakes sharply to avoid a collision.

"They've given up!" cried Ted exultantly, as he jumped from his cab and ran to the other, which was standing still.

"Out of gas more likely," commented Hapworth, as he followed Ted's example, at the same time drawing his revolver.

"The game's up, Flint," shouted Ted, as he tore open the door of the first cab. "We've got you covered. Come out of—"

He stopped aghast.

The cab was empty!

For a moment the pursuers stared at one another, open-mouthed.

Then Ted whirled on the driver.

"Where's your passenger?" he demanded sternly.

The chauffeur who, with stolid calm, had lighted and was smoking a cigarette, shook his head.

"Me not know," he said. "Me look back. Man not there. So I stop."

"Stung!" groaned Ted. "The rascal saw that we were gaining, and when the cab turned a curve he jumped out and made for the woods."

The Japanese said nothing and flicked the ash from his cigarette.

"Come," said Ted, leading the way back to his own cab. "We must turn back and try to find where he jumped. He must have slid and stumbled a good deal at the rate the taxi was going, and there must be some sign of it."

Their driver, at Ted's command, turned about and retraced their course. About two miles distant on the back trail the searchers saw the traces for which they were so eagerly looking.

The ground was torn and furrowed where Flint had struck it in his jump, and there were bent bushes at the side of the road where the momentum had hurled his body.

"And to think of the time we wasted chasing an empty cab!" exclaimed Ted, in sore vexation.

He looked about him. On either side of the road extended vast stretches of brush and woodland.

"A regular wilderness," volunteered their driver, San Francisco born. "If he got in there, you'll have a sweet time finding him. Like looking for a pin the dark."

It was indeed a forlorn prospect. Night was closing in upon them. But Ted Scott knew that the moon was at its full and that it would rise in about an hour.

"We're going to hunt for him now," he de-

clared decidedly. "That is," he added, looking at his companions, "if you're both willing?"

"You can't lose me," replied Hapworth.

"I'm with you till the cows come home," chimed in Mack.

"Good!" said Ted. "You wait for us here till we come back, even if it takes all night," he said to the driver. "I'll make it well worth your while. Get me?"

"I get you," grinned the driver. "Easy money."

He drew up the cab at the side of the road under the shadow of the trees and prepared for a smoke and a nap, while Ted Scott and his companions plunged into the woods.

It had been a toss up as to which side of the road they should try first. To their gratification they speedily found evidence in bushes beaten down or thrust aside that some one had passed that way in haste, and they had no doubt that that some one was Flint.

"We'll spread out at some little distance from each other, so as to cover as much space as possible," directed Ted, who still had his compact roll under his arm, "but we'll keep within easy touch and the first one that sees anything will come and tell the others. We want to make speed, but at the same time make as little noise as possible."

"He's got a good start and probably he'll

keep right on going," suggested Mack dubiously.

"Maybe," conceded Ted. "But we can keep it up as long as he can. Then, too, he may camp somewhere for a little rest, figuring that no search will be made for him before morning. Anyway, we've got to take our chance."

But as time wore on, that chance looked less and less promising. Three hours went by without result. For all the searchers knew, Flint might have doubled on his tracks, and be fleeing in a wholly opposite direction. But they hung on with the tenacity of bloodhounds.

The moon rose and sent a ghostly radiance through the trees tipping the leaves with silver. While this facilitated their progress it also made caution more imperative lest they should be seen by the fugitive.

Ted felt a touch on his arm and saw Hapworth at his side.

"I smell tobacco smoke," he whispered.

Ted sniffed the air and detected the same smell.

Moving as lightly as cats, they got in touch with Mack, and with infinite precaution followed the direction of the scent.

There, in a little glade flooded with moonlight, sat Flint, his back against a tree, his shoulders hunched in an attitude of dejection. He was smoking a pipe as he rested, and at intervals broke out into mutterings and incoher-

ent ejaculations. His nerves were evidently at the breaking point.

Standing behind big trees, the three sensed the situation. Then, Ted silently unloosed the cloth covering of his roll, revealing a long white sheet.

"Leave this to me," he whispered, as he threw the sheet over his head and body, leaving only his face uncovered, "but stand ready, both of you, and keep him covered with the revolver."

The others stared at Ted, dumbfounded.

A moment later a sepulchral moan, eerie as the wailing of a banshee, issued from Ted's lips.

The effect upon Flint was frightful. He sprang to his feet with a shriek of terror, looking wildly in the direction from which the sound had come.

Then into the moonlight with a soft gliding motion stepped Ted, the white sheet floating about him, and advanced slowly upon Flint.

A scream issued from Flint's ashen lips. He turned to flee, but his legs refused their office and he sank cowering on the ground.

"A ghost, a ghost!" he moaned, covering his face to keep out the fearful sight.

"Look upon me," commanded Ted in the same sepulchral tone. "Look well upon my face. Do you know it?"

Flint looked and shrieked again.

"Scott!" he cried. "Raymond Scott! Oh, go away, go away!"

"No," said Ted solemnly. "Never! Never! Not till you tell the truth and give my spirit peace. If you do this, I will go away."

"Yes, yes, **I will!" declared Flint** frantically. "I will tell everything! Only leave me, leave me!"

"It is well," replied Ted. "Tell me then, who killed Frederick Elverson?"

"I—I did," stammered Flint, utterly broken now. "I shot at you, but the bullet hit Elverson. I was hiding in the alley. I was planning to rob the bank. You were coming up the alley and I thought you had me trapped and I fired."

"And then you tried to swear my life away," said Ted accusingly.

"Yes, yes!" admitted the miserable miscreant. "It was your life or mine, and I swore it was you killed Elverson! Now go away! Oh, go away."

"I will, but you'll go with me!" shouted Ted in his natural voice, as he threw the sheet aside, sprang forward, and pinned Flint's arms to his side.

Hapworth and Mack bounded into the open, and before the dumbfounded Flint knew what was happening they had whipped off their belts and securely fastened his hands behind him.

The rage of the rascal when he realized that he was trapped was fearful to witness. It was only when Ted threatened to gag him that he sullenly subsided.

"You'll have lots of time to talk in jail, you murdering villain!" growled Mack, "for that's where you'll spend the rest of your worthless life. Tried to kill me, too, didn't you? Sneaking up behind me in the dark! But you'll get yours now, you skunk, and it'll be plenty."

They took their captive through the woods to the waiting taxicab, put him in and drove rapidly to Honolulu, where Flint was committed to jail. Late as the hour was, Ted would not rest until Flint's confession had been written out and attested by the two witnesses who had heard it from his own lips. Only then did Ted Scott go to the sweetest sleep he had known in months.

He had kept his word. He had vindicated his father's name. He had made his innocence clear to all the world. And he was happy beyond all words.

The story was given to the papers, and stilled forever the whispers of calumny. Flint was extradited to the United States, tried for the killing of Elverson, and sentenced to prison for life.

"Some clever trick, that of yours, Ted, in trapping Flint," remarked Hapworth admir-

ingly the morning after the capture. "How on earth did you come to think of it?"

"Simple enough," laughed Ted. "It was the best way—perhaps the only way to get what I wanted. It wouldn't have been enough to capture Flint, though that was better than nothing. But suppose we had nabbed him in the usual way. He would simply have denied all knowledge of Elverson's death, and we couldn't have proved he did it. Harrow's testimony would have been something, but probably not enough, and my father's memory would still be under a cloud.

"So I kept hoping I'd have a chance to use that sheet. From what Mack told me I knew Flint thought that he was haunted by ghosts. His nerves were all shot to pieces. I figured that if he thought I was my father's ghost—I've been told I'm the exact image of what he was—he'd break down and confess. And, you see, he did."

The aviators stayed but a few days longer in Honolulu, where the people tried to kill them with kindness. Before they left Ted secured a good job for Mack, whose gratitude to his preserver knew no bounds.

The *Silver Streak* was carefully crated and put on board of the steamer that bore Ted and Hapworth to San Francisco. Ted little dreamed of the part that gallant plane was destined to play in air adventures still more

thrilling, to be told in subsequent volumes of this series.

"Of all the things you've done, Ted, which has given you the most satisfaction?" asked Walter Hapworth, as they sat on the deck of the liner that was carrying them homeward. "Was it the flight over the Atlantic or the one over the Pacific? For of course it was one of the two."

"Neither," replied Ted.

Hapworth looked at him in surprise.

"What is it then?"

"The clearing of my father's name," replied Ted Scott.

THE END

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